



ESSAYS IN IMITATION

ALGERNON CECIL

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BY ALGERNON CECIL

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TO THE MEMORY OF

THOMAS CARLYLE, JONATHAN SWIFT,

AND

CHARLES LAMB,

THESE ESSAYS ARE INSCRIBED WITH

INFINITE APOLOGY

PREFACE

ONE or two of those who have had the kindness and the patience to look at these essays before publication have spoken of them as parodies. This may be a very adequate and even a very flattering estimate of their value, but it does not represent the author's purpose in writing them. Parodies, as he understands them, are designed to ridicule their originals. He has been moved by no such impious motive. His object has been no more than to recall to mind some points of view which are no longer in fashion. Most of us have probably wished at some time or other that a favourite author were alive to observe and pass criticism upon an ever-changing world ; for scenes alter with the seasons and the years, while standpoints remain as secure as the eternal hills. The present writer has been so rash as to try to discover some of these haunted spots, to strike the exact altitudes which would have

stimulated the conversational gifts of his models to the uttermost, and to detect the precise circumstances, grave and gay, which would have transfixed their gaze. Their genius, indeed, is gone beyond recall, but memory may do something to supply the place of vision, and imitation becomes pardonable where reality is impossible of attainment.

The author's best thanks are due to Mr. William Blackwood for kindly allowing him to reprint "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Bridge," which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in June, 1908. The other essays in the book appear now for the first time.

October 3, 1910.

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A CHAPTER IN THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

“ Dans la nuit du 14 au 15 juillet, 1789, le duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt fit réveiller Louis XVI. pour lui annoncer la prise de la Bastille. ‘C’est donc une révolte,’ dit le roi. ‘Sire,’ répondit le duc, ‘c’est une révolution.’ ”

“ This is not a Budget, but a Revolution ; a social and political revolution of the first magnitude. It is obviously intended as one ; it is one on the face of it.”—Lord Rosebery to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, June 22, 1909.

MR. CHANCELLOR ASQUITH, making his way beneath April skies across the dun-coloured *landes* of Southern France to accommodate Majesty, nowise inclined to forsake bracing airs of the Gallic Epidaurus, doubtless took occasion during that troublesome journey to consider in his dispassionate way what Muse Clio might chance to say of him when he too should go the way of his predecessor, now lying half-conscious on his death-bed, a weary, worn old man of whom no one will have henceforward anything but kindly

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memories. A matter this, certainly, meet for consideration!—how mortal man shall, with any credit to himself, govern some forty million and more of human creatures, men and (what in these times is more problematical) women, mostly, alas! fools. A matter altogether most considerable for our Chancellor, whether he shall be able to descry the destinies of his country, and be withal the fly-wheel of a party machine running at best jerkily, with a thousand groans and sighs, and at worst mangling human hopes—ay, and human consciences too—in its monstrous clutch. Realized ambitions! have they not this disadvantage—that the qualities needed to grasp them are oftentimes not the qualities needed to hold them? Among the young men of promise, of whom little Doctor Jowett of famous memory once had his quiverful, how many have hit the mark and, being lodged there, have penetrated? An interesting inquiry, the answer to which might shed much light on the merits of our University education, and be of more value than many statistics with which the poor world is encumbered. Inquiry, however, not for us, to whom it is mostly given to watch men making giddy rushes, comet-like, across the path of History, and then

falling back, perchance for ever, into the infinity of their souls.

Of our Chancellor this much at least may be confidently affirmed—that he rushes not, nor grows giddy. His head is passing clear; not to no purpose has he been a busy advocate, elucidating some men's affairs and entangling those of others. His feet, too, are well set, yet planted so as he can shift them if needs must. But, O Mortal, hast thou heart? Canst thou feel with men, inspire them, speak *for* them, and not only *before* them? Dost thou altogether wisely to think of Progress as a triumph of Reason over Passion? In what kingly man's breast hast thou found this thought enshrined—that men are governed by argument? Mahomet thought not so, nor Oliver. Nay! was it not rather by intoxicating verbosity and perfervid violence of gesture than by any reasonableness, sweet or sour, that thy sponsor, the Grand Old Man of memory pretty nearly forgotten by his followers, led his countrymen dancing they knew not whither? Men may not live by bread alone, nor be much taught by argument. Wherefore that precise little philosopher, who a hundred years back would step daily through Königsberg with mouth tight shut for fear

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of germs and great exactitude of punctuality, did well for the honour of his kind to discover, beyond reach of discussion, a pure reason of the heart, and to reduce all heartless thinking to mere rationalism, which of all things that have entered into the mind of man is the foolishhest and most deceitful. The Hebrew Conjuror himself never tumbled into last-named pit of destruction, but said, with keen flash of insight, that men were born to obey and to adore, and, if deprived of natural objects of worship, would fashion idols out of their own hearts. But what Ideal thou hast to offer thy fellow-men I find not, unless it be an everlasting wind-bag of dispute, whence shall issue disruptive blasts, blowing every way and bearing all human stabilities, faiths, loyalties, convictions, our very British Constitution itself, into abysmal chaos. This truly thou hast to offer; it is the Ultima Thule of thy desires, the Sangraal of thy visions, the Hesperides Apples of thy labours. Most rational were it to follow thee if, indeed, men were made rational. Others, wiser in their generation, will seek to lead captive the Human Spirit—the nobler passions of it, if so be God has granted this to them; if not so, its baser ones—envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharit-

ableness — against which we sometimes pray.

But for such lucubrations, intruding spectral-wise from other worlds into this rough world of ours, hast thou now little fancy, O Chancellor, that shalt be Chancellor no more. This giving up of thy Exchequer is that which it chiefly concerns thee to reflect upon : it is the momentousest thing thou hast done or shalt do, for more hangs always upon finance than even this money-grubbing world dreams of, and exchequers are properly the stomachs of bodies-politic. Scarcely shalt thou anywhere discover another man of as sound understanding and steady speech as thyself to carry national money-bag ! Yet among heterogeneous conglomerate of follies and talents thou must call thy Cabinet do we seem to discern one that might have been thy salvation hadst thou known the things that belonged to thy peace—a wondrous sort of man, unclassifiable, an advocate metaphysico-polemical, part lawyer, part philosopher, part warrior ; call him, after great Mirabeau's prescription, Napoleon Silvertongue. Yet, alas ! poor Premier, are there not other qualities than those we fancy by which our new aristocracy of intellect must be determined ? Thou shalt

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kiss hands of King Edward, yet is Majesty Itself but Viceroy, and behind sits Suzerain Demos, grinning. This, then, chiefly shalt thou consider—who hath ear of King Demos? Which august Sovereign, oftentimes silent and inarticulately suffering, sets much store by shrill tongue and abundance of bitter words—priceless possessions in this new age of human perfectibility, but not yet perfectly possessed save by two members of thy Ministry that is to be.

Such explanation, at least, is the only one discoverable by us for appointment signalled some while since by Chaldeans of Journalism. David Lloyd George—Little David, “a slightly-built, almost frail-looking man” (says one contemporary account*), “giving the impression of a *gaillard* of the sword-and-ruffle period”—shall be Chancellor, whose qualifications for that office the world must for nine days ignorantly debate. Which gaseous discussion, being forcibly compressed, may be packed into two propositions of moderate compass—viz., that the said right honourable personage is a product of Welsh temperament and Nonconformist conscience (see to it, David, that thou give men no occasion to say that thou art

* “The Asquith Parliament.”

of Welsh conscience and Nonconformist temperament !): that the result is a character of some complexity, bitter-violent in presence of King Demos, and sweet-conciliatory in presence of gentlemen: that, in brief, the readiness of Right Honourable tongue is nowise disputable, nor the steadiness of same unruly member anywise assured.

To Board of Trade, thus left disconsolate, is comfort administered in the person of King Demos's other courtier, of whom we may not open any newspaper without hearing much; which, however, may on examination prove to be *parvum in multo*. He has been much busied with Journalism; wherefore Journalism must in courtesy be much busied with him. He is of thick-set, tireless frame; in his thirty-fourth year; of mocking, mobile tongue; his name Winston, heretofore styled Churchill, while ducal blood was anything accounted of. He was a Conservative till before the Liberals took office and never wanted energy. A pluck and decision is in this small, virile figure: success he identifies with the possession of place. What if he, the marvellous boy, should emerge from out the ruck of politics, suddenly like a rocket; childlike-terrible, with uncanny, half-paternal splendour to

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gleam for a moment on the path of History and begone, leaving no mark behind; to be held in wonder, unaccountable, through long centuries. Forgetting Hibernian coalitions within and the dim-suffering myriads without, Parliament will look fixedly at this one indomitable Apparition of a Winston; will note whither he rises, how the little Fire belches forth so brilliant; then, perchance, for want of lofty purpose, decays.

Of other promotions, decorations, and shelvings that attend on changes of Ministry must it be briefly spoken. Ex-Viceroy Elgin, after three years' governance of Master Winston and the British Colonies, wholly disappears, wearied out, some say, by task beyond the power of mortal man, and is succeeded by my Lord Crewe, who shall henceforth direct the Upper House with much discretion. My Lord Tweedmouth, too, with reputation sadly damaged by hasty notes and queries of German Kaiser, forsakes his Admiralty-berth for a softer couch, becomes Lord President of Council, and will be heard of no more. In his stead reigns Reginald McKenna, hitherto busied in salving pricks of Nonconformist conscience, but now commissioned to still naval 'breezes,' if so be he may.

Such the commotions on the summit of political Olympus! On the lower slopes is there little commotion of consequence, save the appointment to Secretariate of Local Government Board of one Masterman—call him, according to the familiar prescription, Desmoulins-Saint-Simon, for is he not the anti-type of the beloved Camille with Socialist Saint-Simonian schemes running in his brain?—all our eloquent, sentimental New Journalism tending to fashion, as said some naughty wag, hearts of gold but heads—of lighter matter.

Muse Clio, stooping from her perch to steal a look at completed Asquith-Administration, notes with much curiosity and apprehension predominance therein of lawyers; for were not these gentlemen of the gown, in spite of demure appearance and white-wigged incorruptibility, once the heralds of a mighty revolution? Some relief is it to her to discover among them a pair of honest Johns—honest John Morley at the India Office, sometime a disciple of Philosopher Mill, but now, alas! in his old age, face to face with scores of young Babu-Mills, not much to his taste; honest John Burns at the Local Government Board, likewise buffeted by a political *jeunesse orageuse*, which he

would be glad to forget if only his quondam socialistic acquaintance might be disposed to let him. Poor Muse Clio! what ironies does it fall to her lot to observe—not the least of them Napoleon Silvertongue at the War Office, cudgelling his metaphysic-laden brain to find how he may sow dragon's teeth on unfertile soil of Great Britain.

But is not our Prime Minister returned, his honour thick upon him, his party thick behind him, a crush-criticism millstone of a majority in his hand with which to grind opposition to powder? "What will he do with it?" we ask of young Fortunatus, entering upon his inheritance; so now of our new-made Premier coming into his own at modest age of fifty-six: which question Old Time and the Heavenly Twins shall presently decide.

Meanwhile, by obsolete whim of British Constitution, one of our Twins has been tossed out of his Cobden cradle, and must seek a safer. Dundee, city of Claverhouse and Marmalade, is deemed stout enough to hold him, and there in the grey dawn, and again at fall of night, must he cry upon his new foster-nurse, which is none other than Scottish Radicalism unkilted now of its old feudal fidelities and running wild in coat and trousers.

A rough, ticklish business this, and now made two-fold rougher; for phenomenon, hitherto unknown on our fair Earth, has in these latter times become familiar, and dread Furies emerge from nethermost oblivion of domesticity to avenge the sacred cause of womanhood and do battle with the tyrant sons of Adam. One of these shall pursue poor Winston in his electoral campaign, driving him before her with hideous clanging bell; whose exploit shall for all time be remembered. Down the ages shall ring thy name, O Malony! who didst in very truth repress the Irrepressible. Dryasdust shall prate of thee in his Annual Register,* and in the ancient ballad shall be henceforth read some remembrance of thee:—

“Winston, he is mounted; he speaks down the street;
The bell is rung backward, and Winston is beat.”

Yet, O ye Shades of Peel and Gladstone, Powers and Dignities of the olden time, what world is this in which Cabinet Ministers fly helter-skelter before furious Suffragettes?

Gallant Malony notwithstanding, Winston is returned to Westminster, where many things are threatening to be done. Of two chiefly must we here take note. First of a

* Annual Register, 1908, p. 100.

Bill for reduction, abolition, or resumption of publicans' licences : which Bill indeed we might properly be required to approve together with Most Reverend and Canny Lord Archbishop (for do not Alcohol and Talk gnaw with poisoned fang at vitals of Modern England ?), yet, being set out to bless, are compelled rather to curse. Some force is there in the saying of indiscreet Irish Archbishop that a free England is better than a sober one ; some truth in observation of experienced physician that our plague-spot is not public-house but sale of spirituous groceries and secret consumption thereof ; some hope in declining popularity of alcoholic liquor. Let us at least have no crab's-march through episcopal topsy-turveydom into Utopia ; if we would root all drunkenness out of the land, let us beat our drunkards manfully, not pillage our publicans for other men's sins. Upon none but Dryasdust is it, however, any longer incumbent to pay attention to a Bill importance of which lay just in this—that it never got itself made law through obstinate resistance of Upper House, and thus drew down on the thrice-devoted heads of Peerage and Beerage the direst thunders of our Downing-Street deities. Even our sage Premier must needs

amuse himself, and others, with sounding and furious words, signifying, perhaps, something.

In this controversy, as in all controversies of our modern Age of Gold, is to be observed a prodigious citation of contradictory statistics, making plain men ask themselves why Majesty, having much beneficent regard for welfare of his people, does not appoint some Statistician-Royal, without whose assent or imprimatur not so much as lowest decimal fraction of a statistic shall be adduced in proof or disproof of opinion. Failing which statistical millennium, every political party shall continue to possess its own ready-reckoner to the confusion of all men and multiplication of the strife of tongues. Temperance-Arithmetics, Tariff-Arithmetics, Budget-Arithmetics—by these are we now encompassed and ensnared, to the great discomfort of our minds.

For Budget-Arithmetic will there soon be occasion enough; an electoral bribe, both in law and courtesy entitled an old-age pension, being in process of donation and requiring to be paid for. Much and often has this boon been promised thee, O toil-stricken Labourer, trudging thy last lap home across the chill, sodden fields of Time towards

Eternity, and now, at length, shall really be thine, whether thou art provident or improvident, wise or wasteful, whether thou hast stored up oil, or not, to sustain thy poor flickering lamp of life—to the amount, perchance, of five shillings a week, if thou art not incurably good-for-nothing and thy wife be no longer here to trouble thee. Of old-time Feudal Government strove to give thee Faith and Hope and Loyalty, but Contract-Government has given thee a Pension. Truly thou art at last in luck, as Father Asquith shall tell thee in suave language of benevolence, and shalt duly return thanks to him at ensuing election-tide, if indeed thou be not, as he fears, too ungrateful. *Beati possidentes*, blessed are those that sit on the Treasury Bench, since they may do good, hoping for something again.

Somewhere among memorabilia of Dryasdust do I find record of a speech by one Russell-Wakefield, of whom it is written that he was a Church dignitary, much beloved and respected by men of all conditions, doing his duty in Church and State without extravagance—a kind of Abbot Samson, we may fancy, of these latter days. He, good, simple man, having the poor always with him in spiritual or bodily presence and

speaking to souls like-minded with himself, did express hope that problem of poverty might somehow be excluded from region of party politics and resolved without loss or gain of place to those contending with it. Noble Heart! well is it for thy country that there are some like thee to dream of united national effort to doctor sick Humanity without fee or fear. To our poor Premier, struggling in hot haste to set up his Old Age Pensions scheme, whilst thou art yet deliberating thy Poor Law Commission Report, are no such Arcadian dreams permitted; rather must he ride forward swiftly, scattering *largesse* as he goes. And of thy very self is it not lamentably true that thy words are but pious-deprecatory, that thou must thyself, being *enwebbed*, produce a Minority Report, which, if we mistake not, shall in due time become the badge of party? O Party! Party! Ever must thou be hospitably received on this blind earth of ours, being indeed oftentimes entertained unawares, but now art hallowed into a principle, art become a goddess—of discord—and hast entered into our very bones and blood.

Yet, O Reader, that art sad because so little may be done to gladden the lives of

thy suffering fellows, and sadder that so much is done unwisely, hast thou ever reflected what countless noble and generous hearts would vanish with the decay of those very things which we most deplore? What host of cheery lawyers must be suppressed with suppression of Spite and Crime! What legion of devoted clergymen, austere moralists, pungent satirists with disappearance of Vice! What band of heroes with extinction of War! What company of sly humorists with decline of Lunacy! What guild of enthusiastic philanthropists with decay of Poverty! Good reason, surely, for taking the world as it is, until Providence send us a better, and not exaggerating our estimate of its capabilities in the meantime!

Government-machine all this while is lumbering along, heaving like weary Titan beneath the destinies of a mighty people. Of speech indeed, if that be to the purpose, is there no lack; of action also sometimes somewhat. Notable is it that in this Parliament Socialism (by which nebulosity may we properly indicate all Providence-amelioration as opposed to self-amelioration) has at last got itself represented, is become volcanic-active, and belches forth intermittent smoke through the mouths of

Citizens Keir Hardie and Grayson. Of one such periodic eruption do we find record about this time; Majesty supposing his royal castle of Windsor to be an Englishman's house and having withheld customary invitation to his royal garden-party from our pilgrim fathers of Equality. Mankind is, for the most part, sadly heedless of ensuing lament; is, indeed, somewhat amused by it, not discerning, as we are told, its greatest men. England, besides, has much else to be sad about. Pensions are admirable, but how much more admirable would they be had they not to be paid for! Much need is there to discover the golden streams of Pactolus;—a task assuredly more profitable than to discover the South Pole, of which also there is some talk. In default thereof must the winter be spent by all sensible men in searchings of pocket. Jaded politicians, sitting out the glorious autumn days in infinite debate at Westminster, whilst our sallow Thames, flowing alongside, silent, effective, carries much finite rubbish into kindly ocean of oblivion; pauper squires, for whose behoof ambitious ancestors have added field to field; publicans, condemned by a paternal government to be the whipping-boys of drunken men; even

our Little David casting about, as he himself declared, in reckless but most truthful jest, for hen-roosts to rob—for each and all of these life has its anxieties, which will not grow less.

For to this has it come, that Free-Trade Finance is, as they say, bankrupt, and cannot defray increasing national expenditure except by plunder. This, then, only has our New Economy to consider, "Who shall be plundered?" Most assuredly in this shrewd millennial democracy of ours, from which Astræa has fled (as once from Grand-Monarque despotism), most assuredly those whose votes are already lost to us—the lords of the land and the lords of the public-house. How simple do moral problems become when we determine them by admirablest utilitarian stratagem of identifying our own convenience with the public good!

All things, by wise decree of a kindly Providence, come to an end, even (best boon of all) suspense—for our golden geese even as for the rest of us. The winter of their discontent is past; soon shall be the summer of their despair, and by Michaelmas, unless the heavens thunder, shall they be plucked. Long enough have they fattened on the

substance of others ; henceforth shall others grow fat upon them. A New Age is dawning, which the Heavenly Twins shall disclose when it shall be no more asked what a man has, but how he got it. Which notable advance in liberty is incorporate in Little David's finance.

Of Budget itself, as of all budgets, none but Dryasdust may comfortably discourse. To less laborious men shall matters shape themselves somewhat thus. In increased naval expenditure (British public being just now more than usually nervous of Kaiser Wilhelm) shall three millions of money be sunk, and our redemption of National Debt reduced by like amount. Of remaining eleven millions of increase shall nine be dedicated to old-age pensions, and two abandoned to sundry beneficent schemes for promoting highways, mobility of labour and what-not, for making the land fruitful and multiplying the inhabitants thereof.

Thus merrily runs one side of our ledger ; not so merrily the other. Life not being all beer and skittles, therefore by our new logic of sentiment shall beer and skittles pay forfeit. To beer then, with which we reckon spirits and tobacco, shall six millions be debited ; to skittles, that is our actual or

potential capital, likewise some six millions. A scheme this surely of sweetest simplicity and winsomest innocence, providing abundance of revenue and restricting both drunkenness and wealth! A Budget altogether wise and paternal, if there be not (as Philosopher Mill used to fancy) a saturation point for taxes nor any more merit in saving your money than in spending it! One little item therein may give us pause—the halfpenny (“only a copper,” as Little David shall say slyly) henceforth payable on every pound’s value of land unbuilt upon in the neighbourhood of towns. A very taking thing this copper, striking the imagination of our working-classes, before whose cheap dwellings our stately homes and pleasure-grounds must hop and skip incontinent! A thing cunningly devised, which shall have consequences; a landlord’s mite which in due time we shall steepen mightily! If a land-owning man do not develop his land, he shall be taxed; also, if he do develop it, he shall be taxed. A veritable bed of Procrustes these land-clauses on which landlords shall be alternately racked and limb-lopped! And of the whole Budget must we not say that it is a Morton’s Fork, by means of which, as good

Sir Thomas Whittaker did aver, all rich men were diabolically pricked and prodded ?

Great, certainly, is the inventive genius of Little David ; recalling infinite facility of Comptroller Calonne, who, being asked by Marie Antoinette, a hundred years ago and more, if something were not hard to accomplish, gallantly replied : "Madame, if it is but difficult, it is done ; if it is impossible, it shall be done." Great also is the courage of Little David, who with Philistine cheers alone to hearten him (for does not Israel take the contrary part!) has gone forth to battle with Goliath of Capitalism. No more shall he be rightly called David, but rather George, having become by undisputed succession heir to the ever-memorable Henry George. Socialism has, it seems, been brought to birth at last after prolonged travail-pains here in Merrie England, and shall be identified by Ex-Liberal Premier, world-famous French Economist and Socialists themselves, who may, we fancy, have some occasion to know it. A thing, as we have said, of much contradictoriness of definition, meaning in utmost resort abolition of privileges, notably of wealth ; though of the causes of wealth, of health, intellect and luck, which also are privileged, shall we not

so easily be quit. A thing none the less real, vital, peculiar to a shallow thought-bedizened age of mankind, and, like other things in this motley-coloured world of ours, of mixed good and evil. Chemical analysis thereof discovers therein all manner of elements, greed, envy, hatred, together with heavy admixture of suffering, hopelessness, and pity; also, let us add, of love, very blind as is its wont. A thing of human hopes and curses, compounded of Iron Laws, Golden Rules, New Theologies, fads, follies, vain imaginings, all packed into one awfulest Beecham's Pill of a dose which Old England is to swallow and, being thereby purged of all her dross, grow young again. For of this new Ideal must it be said that, in spite of much volatile explosiveness, it gravitates through sheer materiality altogether earthwards. Material, alas! it remains, even when handled by poor Camille-Saint Simon, writing "From the Abyss" whither he has gone down. Material is the end of it, this being no less a matter than artificial re-distribution of wealth;—material and also exceedingly welcome to poor Lazarus knocking something more noisily than usual at Dives' gate. Material, also, is the faith of it—that wealth is happiness; which is the

strongest delusion sent to trouble the sons of men and in these times the commonest. What shall be said of the prophet of it shalt thou, O Reader, determine from perusal of his prophesying:—

“When,” said he, taking Budget for text, “ye find a man that is poor, ye must not say to him that it is the Will of God, for such a statement is a horrible blasphemy. Ye should say, in solemn, simple language, that it is a damnable thing, and that ye have come to put a stop to it because your will is the will of God. By that means ye shall put the man to whom ye speak on the high-road to realize that the important thing to understand is that his will is the will of God too.”*

Teaching altogether the wickedest that has yet been heard in Christendon—“vox populi, vox Dei” in sober earnest—of which no man may foretell the end. Beginning, however, is plain enough, and shall be debated through the Summer and Fall of this Year of Grace 1909. Of which mighty conflict only some lazy echoes reach us now, all the brilliant fence, parry and Rupert-thrust of debate being sadly dulled by belabouring of clubs and bludgeons, or

* Bernard Shaw, *Times*, October 12, 1909.

platform demagoguery of a democratic age. Yet of King Arthur and his hundred and sixty knights and of the fight they fought in their Thermopylæ-pass will some golden legend some day arise and be recorded in the next Revolutionary Epic what time a new Disraeli be born to write it.

To discover victors in these linguistic contests is, moreover, a matter of consummate difficulty. No longer, as in days when wrong was expiated by sanguinary loss, do beaten armies fly the field, but with boastfullest bluster march, crowing, about their lost entrenchments. Of solid fundament of deeds, however, do we find this, significance of which our Public Orator shall presently declare, that Little David, amid much turning in the grave of all former Chancellors of the Exchequer, did move two hundred and fifty amendments to his Budget; which no chivalrous courtesy—no, not of Chevalier Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*, had he, poor man, chanced to be living in these unchivalrous times—could possibly have exacted. Reluctantly, therefore, must we confess, in spite of much Radical asseveration to the contrary, that poor David was something overpaid for his services by his salary of five thousand pounds, no part of

the same being set down as unearned income in our national account.

Not a little in fact has to vanish from our People's Budget in these tedious months of discussion. A tax on ungotten minerals passes into limbo of absurdities. The new Domesday-Book is to be compiled at cost of the nation instead of the land-owner, and threatens to cost ten millions of money, though our wise Prime Minister prudently says two. Let us note in passing how costly a monument to Little David is this new Domesday-Book of his, how much revenue we shall spend thereon before it shall begin to make us any return. Well said some tribune of people, with wit unimpaired by tedious session, that it brought back memories of an ancient nursery saw!—

“When I was young and had no sense,
I bought a shilling for eighteen-pence.”

Which notable bargain was now to be imitated by a British Government in its old age. Among other concessions we shall do well to take note of these : exemption of agricultural land from undeveloped land-tax, exemption of landlords from taxation of returns returning whence they came, and exemption of lovers of freedom from being delivered

over to bureaucratic justice. For which considerable mercies the gentlemen of England may do well to be grateful.

But of what use to debate in detail particular rights and wrongs? Is there not, after all, one grand wrong, which Little David shall state sympathetically to sympathetic audiences—that the rich are rich; likewise one grand right—that the poor wish to be? Into these fundamental distinctions of having, and not having, and wanting to have, disappear at last all loyalties, fidelities, humanities, and must be dwelt on no more. Henceforth in this largest age of mankind is our fair earth to become again a huge arena upon which beasts, clad for grim jest in human skins, must seek their prey; the idle rich striving to defend their wealth and the industrious poor (become a very *chevalerie d'industrie*) striving to get it, if indeed there be left aught to be gotten or defended. Being grown incapable of feeling our spiritual equality, let us make what haste we may to found a social equality. To this Utopia, in fact, has our Godless social philosophy found its way at last, and may be blest of Christian bishops notwithstanding.

And now what tempest of speech throughout the land: cries of party and counter-

cries ; war-whoops of leagues innumerable, masculine, feminine (we had almost said neuter) ; groans of timid old women that had hoped to end their political careers in peace ; curses, low-muttered, of those about to be robbed ; yells, also, of those about to rob ; brag, bluster, vomitings of the dregs of Erebus, across which roaring waste of waters wise men's voices may scarcely be heard.

Adrift upon these seas of speech, swelling up mountainous, interminable, wave upon wave, each wordier than the last, who may hope to keep his heart high beating and head erect, and not rather cast himself despairing into nethermost ocean ? When poor Gigadibs, that sails these wintry seas all the year, shall hardly be saved, what chance remains for lesser men, even for Muse Clio herself ? To touch bottom, is not that what we hope to do ; what indeed we shall do sooner or later, corpse-wise if not anchor-wise ; what assuredly every man of us is sent into this world to do, so far as his erring heart will let him ? In discreet politicians, then, in Prime Minister Asquith and his like, shall we not greatly interest ourselves ; their science being exactly not to touch bottom, to know what ought not to be said rather than to say what ought ; to drift and tack and

trim. Not with so much wisdom is the world governed. More wisely shall we observe those that speak out of the fulness of their hearts; heart reason being greatly more potent than head reason on this strange earth of ours. Muse Clio, indeed, in charitable or philosophic mood will some day seek to attribute Little David's success to abnormal cardiac affection, to heart congenitally solicitous for poor wastrel humanity and stoutly defiant of Dismal Science—sentimentalities both of them as agreeable to King Demos during temporary loss of reason, as once Great David's harp to King Saul in like adversity.

At Limehouse, then (since Mansion House has nothing to say to him, though much about him), shall poor David make revelation of himself—at Limehouse, where King Demos keeps low festival among the grey shadows. A red-letter day it is for Limehouse, this thirtieth day of July, when a heaven-born Chancellor descends upon it, bringing not indeed a new heaven (has not Mr. Campbell of the City Temple already seen to that?) but, which to Limehouse is more interesting, a new earth! A red-letter day or English *Quatorze-Juillet*, deserving of some notable name; call it, in default of better, the Day of Dukes. For,

alas ! of this famous Limehouse speech is one thing only remembered or rememberable: the first blast of a brazen trumpet against the monstrous regimen of Dukes. Long have the pale Children of Want, in their penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, or yet more vivid flights, if such there be, of inventive literature, read of these spoilt sons of Fortune, and now shall really behold them in dismallest ineptitude with the aid of Little David's mirror. These nurslings of luxury, perfumed denizens of Armida Palace, who have sat idle all these years sweeping in their blackmail rents, cannot, forsooth, spare one poor copper to finance the rescue work of beneficent Socialism. What matter if in framing our indictment against such vermin we suppress some facts and discolour others ; if we should even betake ourselves to stating that which is not fact ! Democratic speech has no need to be nice ; democratic justice has always been rough and ready. Did the ever-memorable Fouquier-Tinville, tossing his batches of aristocrats into the maw of Madame Guillotine, trouble himself with terminological exactitude ? In unprogressive England, alas ! have we no guillotine (outside Parliament, where it is useful enough), nothing

but old-fashioned pillories; yet these will serve. There shall ducal ears be nailed, if their owners have departed so much as a hair's breadth from Davidic orthodoxy, or even if not. To be a Duke is now no more to be *dux*-like, but is become *drone*-like: against which acute pin-prick Dukes shall protest and protest too much. Did not one noble Marquis loudly complain of impending reduction in his bags of game and of serious public loss incident thereto? How much wiser, like traditionary Marquis de l'Aigle, to have gone on with his sport and snapped his fingers at the Revolution!

Yet, sagacious Reader, reflect and find it in thy heart to pity these abandoned criminals as well as their miserable victims. Consider how thou thyself, well-warmed and filled by generous meal and yet more generous coat, on some chill March night when raw fog is clutching at the throat, hast been assailed by Skulking Wretchedness, whining for a copper; and thy own self, being deeply imbued with the doctrines of Organized Charity and seeing that way no salvation for the miserable soul, hast forthwith refused it and departed, not indefensible except in appearance. To straits like thine have these honest Dukes been now

reduced and shall in no wise escape by making moan.

Dismal Science, at her counting-house, shall speak her mind more freely and be more respectfully heard; the making of budgets being properly her concern. Alas! for those Davidic Verities that glittered so bright in the limelight; all is not gold that glitters. Dismal Science will have none of them, finds them tinsel, and cheap at that; dares even to make fun of them, calling "the war against poverty" a war upon wealth, and the "son of the people" their prodigal son. In the new earth, Davidic maxims may obtain; in this old earth, willy-nilly, in spite of much assurance to the contrary, do the old maxims still hold good—that employment follows on enterprise, enterprise on credit, credit on confidence; to which confidence poor David, with the best intention, has given rudest shake.

Cold comfort this, falling like glacial shower upon the swarmery (*Schwärmerei*, as the Germans say) of our Limehouse mob—if indeed, in their cold discomfort, they can be sensible of it.

Must we then, at bidding of Dismal Science and in proper disgust at our Millennial prophets with their horns of iron, put away

Hope with childish things? Assuredly if in this grim world of opposites portending a better, it be our hope to have the poor no more with us. Against such vain imaginings shall the iron horns push in vain. Yet if there be an everlasting no, is there not also an everlasting yea? Is there not always hope that leaving false parades of wealth, leaving likewise false discontents, we may by much silent criticism of one other and secret growth of sound opinion, promote the thing that we have at heart, and not its contrary? Where right was might among early Christians, brown-habited Franciscans, or Wesleyan Revivalists, is there scant record of Limehouse eloquence; Truth having little use for speech, nor Justice any need of limelight. To such measure of nobility as was possible for him might poor David perchance have attained by pawning his Exchequer for a rope-girdle.

But of what use to consider possibilities? Are we not providentially stationed in front of realities, grim enough some of them—notably this present reality that a Chancellor of the Exchequer has turned demagogue? Grim for all men from the Shepherd of the People, sitting on his throne, down to God's silly sheep in their slums, whom Little David

would clothe in wolf-skins if he might. Grimpest of all for this sceptred isle of ours, this precious stone set in the silver sea, needing now somewhat more than usual to be without crack or fissure. Yet among other realities do we thankfully reckon this one, that beside Economic Men, of Socialist or Tariff-Reform brand, there are also Englishmen who set country always before party and reckon the welfare of one to be the welfare of all. To such, accustomed mostly to sit inarticulate in darkness, does there wing its way in these early days of September a true word, æther-borne, from once-fair City on the Clyde, now by wholesome neglect of beauty become the metropolis of Scottish trade. Thither, with patient Reader's consent, shall we ourselves be wafted (on wings of fancy or witches' broom-stick, if nought else avail) to hear our Public Orator "on the situation."

A strange phenomenon this Orator, unlike any before discerned in England or that may be visible again, the remarkablest man of his time—or, at least, the most remarked—the powerfulest that ever escaped the responsibilities of power; the most aristocratic, yet of ostentatious democratic profession; the most wayward yet of loftiest patriotic

sentiment! Of sentiment, but, alas! not of will. A man that must act his patriotism with utmost dramatic finish, but cannot enact it. A man, therefore, as all true actors are, of infinite variety, of infinite jest and pathos; who will wear the double mask, and taste life in its fulness. Just equipoise is here between the Comedy of Thought and Tragedy of Sense, between Last Phases of Heroic Exile and Post-Prandial Speech. The Race-Course and the Premiership inspire him alike; are both alike exploited: behind burns the Vestal Fire of Ecstasy, incandescent with hard, gem-like flame. A man that might, some fifty years gone by, have formed a Cabinet of all the Talents or Mutual-Admiration Society; which, after much eloquent speechifying and agreeable wittiness, should have been found to have done nothing, having, in fact, nothing that it wanted to do. A man any way mysterious, who does by subtle magic of personality awake the interest of prosaic Englishmen, not altogether unloving of a lord on whom Dame Fortune has showered all her gifts. Luck has ever been his; but was not this its choicest stroke that he, like another Cincinnatus, should at this psychological moment be summoned from ploughing his lonely

furrow to awake Imperial memories and defend their cause? Upon war of clashing tongues this speech of his falls like heaven-sent message, dispelling with silver trumpet-sound crude Asquithian rationalism and Lloyd-Georgian bathos.

"Business and the Budget," they called it on myriad-copy edition; call it, rather, in clearer light of History, "A Plea for the Preservation of Gentlemen." For, indeed, to this has it come at last, after prophetic admonitions innumerable, that the old order, with all its apparatus of broad acres and stately symbolism, embodying much generous tradition of sound sense and high character, not instantly replaceable by our County Council non-sectarian moralities, is struggling for dear life in the rude clutch of the Heavenly Twins. Most piteous is it, yet most inevitable! To all thoughts and things—national, individual—there is a time set, after which they must renew their strength or become fuel of fire—to aristocracies as to the rest. All the work of civilization, says a great writer, has been done by aristocracies. Aristocracy, then, we must have, or become stagnant. Aristocracy, in fact, real or spurious, we shall have—a Flunkey, Prig, or Mammon-Aristocracy, if we cannot get

a Moral one. Clothes, Push, and Banker's Balances—have we not fed, cockered, and faked our aristocracy with these for the last fifty years and longer, and at the end are dissatisfied with it? Also since (as that Compleat Gentleman, Master Peacham, affirms) "all Vertue consisteth in Action, and hardly are they to be admitted for Noble, who (though of never so excellent parts) consume their light, as in a darke Lanthorne, in contemplation, and in Stoical retirednesse," we must advertise our aristocracy so that it may get some hold upon the imagination of great cities. The difficulty, which Master Peacham perceives not, is that true aristocracy will not advertise itself; whilst false, smart, or refuse aristocracy advertises mostly its follies. *Noblesse d'épée* we have always had, and still have; only ten years are gone by since it shed its blood manfully on South African battlefields. *Noblesse de travail* we might have—*aristoi* administrative, clerical, medical, legal, philanthropic, artistic, scientific, even plutocratic—all that have in severest simplicity of life done their duty, been to themselves true, to their craft true, and by surpassing excellence of work have any way inspired their fellow-men. By such, not discoverable by counting of heads or

other popular device, may the whole lump of our Upper House, after much purification, be leavened; otherwise must it become *Chambre Fainéante*, and be named Ichabod. O Reader, beware of letting glory depart from any hearth, home, national institution, or whatsoever it be, into which glory has once entered! Not quickly shall it be replaced, nor immediately shalt thou measure thy loss. All things that have once captivated the imaginations of men are precious, and have some spirituality in them; let strength return there, if so be it can and may. For Socialism is, as our Orator shall declare, the end of all spiritualities—say, then, “the end of all: of Faith, of Family, of Monarchy, of Empire,” even of “Property,” which also is for some men a realized ideal and in its kind ennobling. No sacredness shall we presently find in any kind of property, if we hold one sort of property not sacred and proper for special taxation; no pride of Lares and Penates, if we deplete intemperately the family hoard at every fortuitous succession. Arguments these of much force with thinking men; from which therefore Little David shall prudently turn aside!

And now once more from Olympian peaks

must we descend to plains of Tartarus, where is gay Carnival and Battle of Mud, in which poor David, now altogether encompassed with sparks, and walking constantly in the light of them, shall play his part. Some occasion for gratitude is there that Master Winston, foreseeing consequence of Radical administration, did with commendablest foresight substitute for manly Saxon "lie" (*leogan* or *lügen*) elegant classical version of the same—"terminological inexactitude"; without which metamorphosis Mrs. Grundy must in these times have suffered daily outrage. Not even thus shall she altogether escape, for King Arthur, most courteous of controversialists, shall be driven to apply the ancient exactitude with dreadfullest directness to Lord Advocate Ure, thenceforward of much notoriety, not otherwise attainable by him. Upon which ugly affair and linguistic duel issuing therefrom have we fortunately no need to dwell, unless to express pious hope that the said Lord Advocate may thereafter have styled himself, like Citizen Fauchet of French Revolutionary fame, "Procureur-General de la Vérité," Lord Advocate of Truth.*

So with much shrill screech, cat-call and

* Carlyle, "French Revolution," vol. ii., bk. iii., chap. ii.

roaring of bullies, making day hideous, do we journey through that wind-swept autumn toward our appointed end, which end is none other than the stultification of their Lordships' House. All attempts to mend that august assembly having failed, by reason of unaccountable gravitation Torywards of Liberal peers, once disembarassed of their constituencies, nothing is left but to end it, narcotically if possible. For this was Budget-draught cunningly mixed by the Twins, Prime Minister not dissenting. If the sick man drink he shall be extinguished painlessly; if not, he shall none the less die, not painlessly. This, then, have noble lords to determine, death being the sentence, whether they will without protest drink their cup of hemlock or be gibbeted in public on a bare chance that the rope may break. An ugly dilemma on one horn or other of which they must sit, not comfortably. What counsel can do for them shall be done by my Lord Lansdowne, a man of much adroitness and diplomatic skill. "That this House is not justified in giving its consent to this Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country." This shall their Lordships discuss, seated on their red benches in their "gilded dungeon" through

those late afternoons of dying November, and on into the night; their ancestors sentinel at the door, their spiritual fathers, lawn-sleeved, on the cross-benches, Winston on the steps of the throne and the Heavens (could we but see them) above. A picturesque sight, even a pathetic one, if we had time to reflect on it; a subject ready to the brush of artistic genius, so that we might read in our next Academy Catalogue of "Feudalism in the Last Ditch," or "Ave, Winston, morituri te salutant," and rush, gregarious, to behold it.

Yet, *mirabile dictu*, contrary to all expectation, these gorgeous moribund waxworks of ours do in their last hour become wonderfully alive, with no galvanic convulsion of expiring candle, but with sweeping, search-light blaze, penetrating all too brilliantly the dark cavities of the People's Budget. Our wild woodsmen, if they exist, of which we begin to doubt, use their woodcraft to keep under cover. Instead passes eloquent before us a comely procession of Ministers and Ex-Ministers, Proconsuls, Privy Councillors, Prelates, Pundits of Finance, an altogether astonishing vision of Ability, beside whose lofty words our Davidic and Winstonian orations strut disconsolate as Impudence

beside Dignity. Dull Business makes herself heard without any dulness, and will, we may hope, get some hearing in a nation, once given to shop-keeping. To my Lord Revelstoke's impious wish that he could give poor David elementary instruction in the principles of credit does Honest John, calling to mind Mill's logical machinery, reply that the noble lord has been misled by plurality of causes. A less dangerous fallacy, replies Dismal Science, than plurality of consequences, which has enveloped our Budget-makers, who have it in mind to bring about our social salvation wondrously by budgeting for it. Did not even an Apostle leave the receipt of custom before he took over his Apostleship? Yet our Honest John, winding up now with much nobility of thought and speech his tale of threescore years and ten, loftily rebukes the highwaymen that have suddenly held up the coach of Sentimental Democracy. "My Lords," he says, "the more triumphant your majority, the more huge the disparity between your numbers and ours, the more flagrant the political scandal, the more flagrant to the public eye will be the breach in the Constitution. Such a contrast as that, three hundred and seventy-nine against one hundred

and forty-nine in one House, and that only a four years old House; and four hundred or five hundred in this House against forty or fifty—I say it cannot last. You may argue as you like about rights.” Last, indeed, it cannot. Of that have all sensible men long while been aware, and might indeed have found a remedy if honest men had seen fit to help them. Ay, there’s the rub! Ministry will talk much of Second Chamber, will affirm need of it, will day-dream reform of it, but has at bottom no stomach for it, nor any intention of having it, when a dummy-chamber will look as well and obey better.

Of other great speeches Time would fail to tell. Our noble and puissant Orator, having laid the train, does in this last hour hesitate to blow up Budget, trembles, takes flight, and gets clear of the explosion. Was there not, even for him, some profit to be gained from the history of poor Guy Fawkes (put to his annual baptism of fire by ribald urchins some few weeks before), who stood at his post, and was taken match in hand? Sermons there are in stones; also in effigies! Other notable men shall hold, with worthy Falstaff before them, that discretion is the better part of valour; not hating the Budget

less, but loving the Constitution more. Yet what is the Constitution? Is it not a discharge of function by every organ of the body politic? Noble Lords, through no fault of their own, were selected by Mother Nature and their Mother Country to oppose wild-cat schemes, budgetary or otherwise; even Honest John admits so much. This, in their Lordships' judgment, is a wild-cat Finance Bill. Let them, then, do their duty with a good courage, or else make way for more courageous men! Was it not an Arch-democrat who advised "*de l'audace, de l'audace, toujours de l'audace*"?

So is the die cast, irrevocably, for better for worse, for richer for poorer. "A gambler's throw," say some; "an act rendered inevitable by Budget-Protest agitation," say others; an act, anyway, valiant, epoch-making, a bridge from one era to the next. Democracy and the Old Régime are met at last, are at grips with one another, locked in mortal conflict, whilst a world, heavy with Revolution, looks on expectant. Three hundred and fifty to seventy-five—so stand the figures to be remembered in the Annals of Property while Time is. Yet one figure only among those three hundred and fifty need give us pause. It is the old Bishop of Lincoln,

accounted of all men a saint. He is of Puseyite descent, and sees in the Budget more than budgeting; old men, they say, see far. Alone of his brethren he records a vote against it: they, wiser in their generation, abstain. Have not one or two already hailed the rising sun of Socialism? So changeth the old order, giving place to new.

Noble lords trooped home after the division; with what heart History says not. In the ears of some at least must the warning words of Honest John that the note had sounded for an angry and prolonged conflict, that the curtain had but fallen on the first act of the drama, have ominously echoed. A tragic drama to all appearance it will be, yet already refreshed by Comedy! For does not Father Asquith, Shepherd of his Party, proceed with much sonorous pomp of speech to denounce the insolence of noble lords in outraging that very constitution which he is himself all the while proposing to deprive of life.

And now, Winston, away! Away with thy thousand brazen trumpets to hearten thy legions, confirm the doubters, strengthen the weak-kneed, to tell thy countrymen their liberties are violated, their revenue disordered, their volition thwarted by a pirate

crew from the backwoods! Away to thy ancient haunts to preach, the word of Cobden to the men of Lancashire, who, with mills running short time, will hear it mayhap no longer so gladly as of old! Well hast thou chosen thy ground—well and prudently! Is not Lancashire our Delphic Oracle, whose answers are pregnant with consequence? What Lancashire has thought to-day, England has, ere now, thought to-morrow. London is lost to us, therefore must Lancashire be saved. Gallantly labours Winston, crying aloud and sparing not, believing things necessary to be believed, affirming things necessary to be affirmed, making play with fact and fiction, giving no quarter and asking none. Noble Lords indeed are, to all appearance, more likely to need quarter than to give it; meet with much rough horseplay from the Twins and their following; are put up collectively, individually, to be knocked down forthwith, ninepinwise, no one protesting; are become a kind of big-game, which may be shot easily as from a trap. Of formidabler menace are Tariff Reformers, who, like the Twins, come bearing gifts; these have teeth and claws, and wear no velvet gloves. A strange thing this Tariff Reform, significant of the times; Protection

come to life again after half a century of oblivion, and come, if we mistake not, to stay! Our forebears, it seems, were not such fools as we thought them; had more practical knowledge of the world than we gave them credit for; had even some rudimentary ideas of political economy. Even incontrovertible Free Trade Theory has a *reductio ad absurdum* if we are left with nothing to manufacture that cannot be more cheaply manufactured elsewhere; and raw material certainly gives a more generous response than finished products to human energy sitting idle in the market-place. Such the argument intelligibly set forth; to the proletariat must we oftentimes appeal to tax the foreigner, this homely passion having more strength in it than many reasons.

And now upon all treasons, verbal, actual, falls the Truce of God. O Star of Christmas, casting thy clear beam upon this wrangling crowd of human creatures, brothers by blood, by soil, by common heritage of glory and hope of destiny yet unfulfilled, brothers by holiest bond of faith and love this darkling world of ours has ever dreamed of, what answer shall be made thee by all who, through these weary months of strife, have from low purpose or sordid party gain

defiled thy mystic radiance? Into what hideous night of pandemonic gloom and utter balefulness melt now our cries and bursts of spiteful fury. Was it not, as we are advised to read, to men of goodwill that came the promise of peace? And what goodwill is here, let Limehouse eloquently declare. How hardly shall they that trust in riches pass through the Needle's Eye of God! Ay! but perchance, also, they that trust by forced dispersion of riches to make men better.

December glides into January. A New Year is born, and with it breaks again the ancient strife. Speech telleth speech; words fly outward, thoughts remaining behind. Was not language given to conceal thought? Yet, O Reader, rejoice, for, as the month advances, the British People recovers its sovereignty, becomes, as Jean-Jacques used to teach, for a brief fortnight possessed of its natural rights and utterly free. Rejoice! Go for sheer gladness of heart and make thyself drunk with freedom at public meetings, where the British People is now receiving counsel, or at polling-booths, where Itself gives counsel for the welfare of the State. Behold the Man-in-the-Street exalted of a sudden parabolically and actually to be the God-in-the-Car! What need is there any

longer to distribute wealth artificially by budgets or otherwise when by this mere process of taking counsel it can be made to flow freely (sometimes, alas! too freely, as in East Dorset, where we shall presently have a successful petition, to the confusion of poor David and like-minded pious persons, by that time intent upon the establishment of a Gladstone League to suppress feudal and, let us hope, all other kind of illicit intimidation)? Food is free, also cheap; speech is free, also cheap; let us keep them free and cheap in the name of liberty. O Liberty! what bounteous liberalities hast thou in store, even perhaps a bureaucracy in the fulness of time! Do we not well to sport an ass's head like Old Bottom and let Little David tickle our ears with tales of ducal depravities, or excite our palates to revolt with black Teutonic bread? To be thus awakened is, say our Liberal Idealists, in itself a liberal education. To the poll, then, ye towns and counties, from Land's End to John-o'-Groat's; to the poll, ye wise men of all peoples, creeds, and languages in the three kingdoms. Decide now whether ye will have Budget or not, whether ye will have Tariff Reform or not, whether ye will have Noble Lords or not, whether ye

will strengthen your Navy or not; decide all these things instantly and together in this fortnight of freedom, and show what wisdom is in you. But where shall Wisdom be found? Manchester will have no Tariff Reform; Birmingham will absolutely be content with nothing less. Southern Counties will have their Noble Lords; Northern Counties will have none of them. Ireland will have Home Rule and no Budget; Scotland will have Budget and no Lords; and all men severally will have whatsoever they can get. Alas for Pig-Philosophy, preached so zealously for so many months from poster and platform, the end of it is like enough to be that no one will get anything at all! Poor David, with a hundred and five seats lost to the enemy, has certainly not got what he wanted. A majority of one hundred and twenty-four he has got, but a majority for what can no one confidently declare. Not to carry his Budget triumphantly, or perhaps at all; not to demand exercise of royal prerogative; not even to compel Noble Lords to reform themselves!

And now behold our Prime Minister once more hastening across the pleasant land of France in these early days of February to get what rest he may before his next campaign. History can learn little of him during

those ten brief days of repose ; pictures him crying in uneasy sleep, "David, David, give me back my legions." The legions, alas ! are gone beyond recall, vanished into thinnest air. Well were it for him if words, spoken in assurance of victory, would vanish in like manner. "We shall not assume office and we shall not hold office, unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows to be necessary." So stands it written for all time in the columns of our daily Press of Saturday, December 11, 1909 : so was it read by admiring Radicalism at its breakfast-table on that eventful morning. "A strong man, this Prime Minister—will make these Noble Lords sit up, and Majesty, too, if need be—will exact pledge of sufficient creation of peers to insure passage of his Veto-legislation and compel Majesty's assent on pain of having no Government at all. A very pawky man indeed !" Little David must needs outdo his leader, will absolutely not hold office for an hour unless Veto-legislation be guaranteed ; for is he not, as they sing, a jolly good fellow ? Yet now with what modest silence do we greet our words, would eat them silently if we could, but are compelled to eat them noisily by Citizens Redmond and Barnes. Welsh-

men, after all, have eaten leeks before now, and Prime Minister will learn to eat them in due course without grimacing. Was it not old General Peel who said, nearly fifty years ago, that he had learnt from poor Dizzy's manœuvres that there was nothing so elastic as the conscience of a Cabinet Minister? And now is Elasticity again in the air; Rubber booms in the City; Subtlety takes hold of our morals; Flexibility becomes the one unalterable standing order of our Parliamentary procedure. Cabinet meets and meets again; constructs a speech, short and ambiguous, for Majesty to read 'by the advice of his Ministers'; will put national finance to rights and hang their Lordships afterwards with their Lordships' consent. Thus Cabinet proposes; not thus Radicalism disposes; not thus cheaply does Hibernian Redmond dispose of those seventy dominant Irish votes that still are left him. Militant Radicalism, militant Nationalism, will not see national finance put to rights; will see their Lordships hung first of all. Cabinet will therefore do wisely to forget as quickly as possible Prime Minister's lofty assurance that he would, if returned to power, do his utmost to undo mischief wrought by Caitiff Lords, would make it "his first act" in a

new House of Commons, "to reimpose . . . all the taxes and duties . . . embodied in the Finance Bill."* National interest imperatively required such procedure then; party interest imperatively requires other procedure now. Poor Prime Minister! To what sad shifts do the *Sortes Hibernicæ* oftentimes reduce an honest gentleman! Was there not a Russian Tsar, whom Caricature branded on the two cheeks with Order and Counter-order, whilst above upon his forehead she wrote Disorder?

So does Asquith - Ministry manœuvre itself, amid pitiless gibe of opponents, out of that financial year in which it had thought to pass its Budget, without a comma gone, into another. What a blessed thing it is for poor mortals to be able to slough their skin at beginning of a new year and start afresh upon their career! Governments, alas! are of pardalic Ethiopian make, cannot change their skin, nor yet their spots, and must fare forward on their path none the less.

Mr. Punch, disporting himself prophetically some little while before, had depicted our Prime Minister, well-girt in armour, with boots and spurs complete, sadly contemplating a sorry nag, with which, Quixote-

* *Times*, December 3, 1909.

like, he was to assault frowning castle on the heights above. Such, in fact, is now the position. Noble Lords set their castle in order, resolve that nobility shall be no longer held commensurate with wisdom, express themselves, in fact, willing to be reformed. Prime Minister meanwhile mounts Rosinante, couches his lance, and calls upon Noble Lords to surrender forthwith, to veto his bills no more than twice, and to veto his budgets no more at all.

Our People's Budget, meanwhile, is suspended hawk-like in mid-air, would pounce on its prey as it could, but cannot, lest it be itself cut off untimely by Hibernian Redmond and his Nationalists. Prime Minister must settle with them by crook, if not by hook. So on the fourteenth day of April of the Year of Grace nineteen hundred and ten, as night draws on, does he pay the price, which is none other than the majesty of his office, or, if we shrink not from uttering it, than Majesty itself. Poor Prime Minister! Two months, two little months only, are gone by since thou wouldst jealously guard thy Sovereign from being engulfed in that party-whirlpool wherein thou dost struggle to keep afloat. And now hast thou divulged beforehand what confidential advice thou

wilt tender him in circumstances not yet brought to birth. Thy silver speech, responding obedient-mercurial to every breath of party-passion, is become the barometer of King Demos ; there may we watch him wax, whilst Kingship wanes. So goes our Budget through, pregnant with consequence, to be passed into law without division in Another Place. Of itself shall we speak no more, having already spoken much. Of its author must we speak only now in the silver words of the Prime Minister, who is proud to have been associated with him in this great measure, who through these weary months has marked 'his genius, his tact, his courage, his patience.' Blush not, Little David—for they say that thou didst blush*—blush not, but rather thank Providence that thou art not as other men are, unjust, extortioners, landlords, publicans, or even as that wicked citizen of whom Ex-President Roosevelt, passing in triumphal progress through Europe about this time, happened to speak : "Of one man in especial, beyond anyone else, the citizens of a republic should beware, and that is of the man who appeals to them to support him on the ground that he is hostile to other citizens of the republic, that

* *Standard*, Thursday, April 28, 1910, p. 9.

he will secure for those who elect him, in one shape or another, profit at the expense of other citizens of the republic. . . . The man who makes such an appeal should always be presumed to make it for the sake of furthering his own interest."*

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Taxes pass and the gatherers of them, being dust and to dust returning. They are but the base bodies—*corpora vilia*—by which we spring our Reformations, Revolutions, Idealisms, Materialisms, upon a world astounded. Phase Budgetary passes into Phase Inflammatory, and that again into Phase Consummatory, when all things finish or are perfected. Common Humanity lives in the present, skips on its *solfa-terra*, eats, drinks, makes merry, with the molten flood playing about its feet. Uncommon Humanity, regal, two-visaged, dreams of past or future, treads its ancient paths or strikes reckless into the waste, looks backwards, forwards, as gem or bauble takes its fancy. Destinies, eternal, infinite, wait upon a nation's choice. Democracy stands ranged against Empire. Duty, Glory, Madness, Folly, blow their thousand blasts. Sedition lifts its head in Egypt: Ireland, India, groan disruptively.

* *Standard*, April 25, 1910.

Scares Teutonic, communistic, trouble our dreams. Commerce colonial, Commerce national, stand and wait, also serving to confusion. Sibyls come offering books and retire rejected. And the Multitude drifts heedless into the Valley of Decision, not knowing what it decides. Chaos, Cosmos; Cosmos, Chaos; who can tell how all will end?

Sudden, with keen lightning dart from out the cloud, strikes Nemesis, asking a King's ransom for a Year of Shame, and will take no less. And now once more comes Passion, not splenetic but of the heart; Passion, deep, passionate, welling abundant from a nation made one by woe; Passion which will gird our tired feet with wings and bear us trooping in unending progress from near a little house in Cheyne Row to Red William's vaulted Hall in Westminster, where, between a solemn watch of sentinels with drooping heads and arms reversed, beneath white pall and gorgeous jewelled crown, he lies whom we would teach Posterity to call the Peacemaker. So passes on its way in four-fold file that unlovely sable crowd, speaking things unutterable, sobbing its last tribute to its Sovereign—the soul of a nation not altogether unworthy of its ancestry.

* * * * *

‘WAIT AND SEE’

Thus for six blessed months does our whole apparatus of Cant and Chatter cease to revolve, no one having much ear for it. For six or more blessed months are the fortunes of the country left oscillating in the breasts of eight right honourable gentlemen sitting in conference round a table. Eight honourable gentlemen could, we fancy, come to some working agreement upon any practical question in the wide world. Whether eight right honourable gentlemen can do so much has still to be determined. For, indeed, of what passes at this Conference have we as yet no knowledge in the first chapter of our Revolution, but may speak presently, advising our kindly Reader in the meantime to ruminate over the wise proverb of the Prime Minister—to ‘wait and see.’

GULLIVER REDIVIVUS

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

I FOUND the book of which this is a translation among the stock-in-trade of a dealer in old libraries. He could give me no certain information as to the source from which he had derived it, but thought it had been sold him by one of the crew of a trading-vessel which had been in the South Seas. I infer that Callimago is not very far distant from Lilliput, but I can find no mention of it in Black's Atlas, nor even in that of the *Times*. Mr. Lemuel Gulliver may perhaps have visited it as he returned from Lilliput, or upon his way to Brobdingnag, although, for obvious reasons, he did not notice the incident in his famous Voyages. The inhabitants are clearly about the same size as ourselves, and have some knowledge of the classics, but these are the only conclusions, I think, that can be safely drawn from the narrative that follows.

I had some little difficulty at first with the Callimagian language, which was entirely

unknown to me, but as it is founded upon the Latin I soon made shift to read it fluently, and am satisfied that the ensuing translation is a very fair rendering of the original. After some hours of discussion with a learned friend, who occupies a high position in one of our Universities, he persuaded me not to venture upon any version of the name Isotaria, as he maintained that the English tongue is now spoken in so many parts of the globe that no inference might properly be derived from the circumstance that it prevailed in the country where the author landed. With these observations I make so bold as to commend the book to the generosity of the reader, and its imperfections to his indulgence.

CHAPTER I

The author's ancestry—He resolves to travel—His voyage and reception in Isotaria—First impressions of the country.

As is pretty generally known, I am descended in a direct line from the distinguished explorer, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, who, in the course of his memorable voyages, visited our shores, and was there married according to the custom of the country to a lady of our nation. Of this affair there is, I am aware, no mention in Mr. Gulliver's book, and I can only conceive that he supposed it prudent to conceal a matter which might have caused domestic inconvenience in his native home. When Mr. Gulliver continued his travels, his wife, or, as I might more properly say, his widow, feeling herself unable to take leave of her people, lived on to a green old age, and eventually died (somewhere about the year 2500 *), to the inconsolable regret of a devoted family.

* [After a good deal of thought I have come to the conclusion that the Callimagians have adopted the chronology of the ancient Romans. A.V.C. 2500 would be, therefore, about 1750.—ED.]

I shall not weary the reader with any other particulars of my genealogy ; but he will, I am sure, be immediately sensible of the propriety of introducing the name of my illustrious progenitor at the commencement of this narrative. It is, indeed, a very natural supposition, and not, I hope, entirely a presumptuous one, to believe that it is the blood of that famous personage which has enabled me to undertake and describe the arduous adventures which are here recounted.

I had throughout my boyhood perused with the closest attention the histories of such places and peoples as are known to us. From our family memorials I was able to derive a knowledge of the constitution of Lilliput, and good fortune guided my hand to the lofty shelf in one of our public libraries, upon which there lay the records of Utopia and Erewhon. But, as my countrymen will easily forgive me for saying, we are by no means an adventurous nation, and our happy islands, not perhaps altogether to their disadvantage, have, with these exceptions, remained entirely indifferent to the history of the other races of mankind. It was, however, my singular ambition from an early age to tread in the footsteps of my

ancestor, and to win a name for myself and an extension of knowledge for my country.

The principal difficulty which confronted me arose from the complete absence among us of ships and seamen. No craft of even the smallest build navigates our shores, and none of our countrymen have ever shown the least inclination to put to sea. Undaunted by these obstacles, or, perhaps I should say, ignorant of their formidable character, I set to work to construct a boat for myself, and, after several months of labour, set sail on the first day of April in the year 2660.*

I am unable to describe my voyage, partly because our language does not possess the nautical terms requisite for such an undertaking, and partly because during the greater part of the time I lay at the bottom of the little vessel in such an agony of body and mind as I had never before experienced. Having no acquaintance with the effect of the sea-swell upon the human constitution, I supposed at first that I had contracted some mortal disease, and this, added to the novelty of the situation, reduced me to the lowest abyss of depression and despair.

* [The original here is unfortunately blurred. I cannot be certain whether to read 2660 or 2680.—ED.]

The wind carried me whither it fancied, and I lost all account of time and direction.

At length, perhaps some two months after I had set out, and when I was literally at the last gasp, having almost exhausted my scanty provisions and being no longer able to make any show of bearing up against the violent tempests which every few hours threatened to annihilate my vessel and myself, I ran aground upon what I afterwards learned to be a rock situated about half a mile from the mainland. Of what ensued I have no lively recollection, until I found myself lying comfortably in the bottom of a commodious ship, in which were seated several persons, some rowing or steering, while others were regarding me with curiosity and attention. One of the latter, as soon as I had a little recovered myself, leaned forward and asked me how I did in a language which sounded strange and yet familiar; nor was I able at first to reply to him, although I clearly apprehended his meaning. In a short space of time, however, it came into my mind that he was speaking to me in the language of my ever-memorable ancestor, which I had always read with facility, and which in my earliest youth I had heard spoken by some of my ancient relatives. Fortune, which

had so long seemed adverse, had in fact been conducting me with singular care and celerity to the country whence Mr. Lemuel Gulliver had set out nearly two centuries before ; and I could not forbear to thank Providence for so wonderful and unexpected a favour.

It was not long before I began to converse with a person whom, from the respect with which the others treated him, I too readily assumed to be the captain of the vessel, and we continued to talk with each other for some time after a landing had been safely effected. He explained to me that my perilous adventure had been perceived from a neighbouring hamlet, and that a message had been instantly despatched to himself in the capital city of the kingdom. I could not at all comprehend how this had been done with the necessary speed, as the metropolis, he informed me, was distant over one hundred miles from the scene of my shipwreck ; but one of the other persons present assured me that the air* itself afforded a means of communication, a matter which neither at that time nor afterwards was I able to understand. This individual also warned me that I had been addressing a

* [I must not be held responsible for the scientific terminology of Mr. Gulliver's informant.—ED.]

Royal Personage, for that in the event of a casualty by sea or even by land it was the custom for a member of the royal house to attend and inaugurate the rescue. I was at first so much astonished at the company in which I found myself, and the act of condescension which had been performed in my behalf, that I became speechless. After a few moments, however, I felt bound to endeavour to express my sense of obligation, and in halting phrases stammered out my thanks. The Royal Personage told me I must not be at all surprised by his conduct ; that such actions were commonly expected of persons in his rank of life ; that incidents like the present one formed an agreeable variety upon his ordinary avocations and furnished, indeed, the principal events in his career ; and that any neglect to discharge becomingly the duties appurtenant thereto might prove very adverse to his prospects.

We had all this while been advancing in a coach with a pair of horses, but we now stopped at a small wayside building and dismounted. I am at a loss how to describe the strange spectacle which soon after presented itself to my gaze. Along two thin but interminable bars of shining metal there came running towards us at an

incredible speed a monstrous form, emitting black vapour from its nostrils, or rather nostril (for it had but one), and dragging behind it a long and scaly body. As it approached us the monster abated its haste, and eventually stopped immediately before us. I now discovered that what I had taken for a creature of stupendous size was only a very ingenious mechanical construction by which the people of the country transfer themselves with the greatest ease and celerity from place to place.

The extended body of the engine consisted of a number of large coaches, into one of which I was quickly assisted to enter. I should doubtless have experienced very alarming sensations as we began to be carried over the earth at a pace far exceeding any I had ever supposed possible, had not a gentleman who was in attendance upon the Royal Personage hastily engaged me in conversation. The Colonel, for such I presently discovered to be his style and title, inquired of me the reason and purpose of my putting to sea in so frail a vessel. I explained to him as best I could how complete had been my ignorance of the perils of the ocean; an ignorance which, as I added, had been wholly dispelled by my recent

sufferings, and I assured him that my only motives in leaving my home were the love of adventure and the allurements of ambition. He remarked, a little dryly as I thought, that I should most probably have adventure and to spare before I regained my native land, though not perhaps adventure of such a character as I had anticipated; and he then proceeded to inquire by what means I expected to earn my livelihood, or whether I was a person of fortune. In the former case, he said, I should only have to show myself to secure in a short time an ample competence. I did not at first understand what he meant, but he soon elucidated my difficulty.

It appeared that the people among whom I found myself were, like the Lilliputians, extremely curious, and that it was one of their especial delights to sit and gaze at anything of a monstrous, forbidding, or unnatural kind. As my size and features, owing probably to the effect of soil and climate, did not altogether resemble that to which they were accustomed, it was probable that they would supply me with the necessities of existence in order to obtain the satisfaction of looking at me; although, as he said, I must not expect any large reward for exposing myself to the public, since I

was not markedly peculiar or deformed, and the salaries of such persons as myself were always strictly proportioned to the disagreeable nature of their appearance.

At this juncture I happened to have occasion to blow my nose, and pulled out together with my handkerchief a number of large red and white pebbles, with which I had been accustomed to amuse my brothers and sisters. As soon as he saw them he informed me that there was no need to inquire further as to my social position, since I was evidently one of the richest men in the country, and, in fact, the possessor of a magnificent fortune. The stones, it appeared, were commonly used by ladies of quality to decorate their persons, and would procure for me every possible consideration, and even, should I desire it, the privilege without the responsibility of rank. I was very well satisfied to hear this, as I had not at all enjoyed the prospect of exhibiting myself to gain a livelihood, and I could not but rejoice at the lucky chance which would enable me to associate on an equality with the greatest persons in the realm.

The Colonel, who now began to treat me as an intimate, advised me that we were

upon the point of arriving at our destination, and a little later we entered a dark ravine, the sides of which were formed by buildings entirely unlike any I had seen before. They were almost all of a blackish-brown, and combined with the murkiness of the atmosphere to cause an impression of melancholy to which I could find no parallel in the whole course of my experience. It appeared, however, that the inhabitants for the most part preferred this style of residence to any other, as it enabled them to shut out altogether the monotonous silence of Nature and to enjoy to the uttermost the exhilarating and incessant babel of Man.

By this time we were arrived: the mechanism of our vehicle ceased to revolve, and we dismounted upon a pavement of stone. I was at first completely overpowered by the sight which was disclosed to my view. A vast array of human beings seemed to be moving in every direction without purpose or method, and I supposed myself to have fallen amongst a company of lunatics. But this impression was soon dispelled by my companion, who explained to me that there existed a particular yellow metal in the bowels of the earth which supplied the larger number of

these people with a principle of motion, and of which they were very constantly in pursuit. He informed me that the most part of them acted in the belief that the yellow metal was itself the source and origin of wealth, and not the confidence and security engendered by its possession ; but that this latter was a subtle doctrine which he did not expect me to understand, the more so as the Chief of the Public Exchequer was at present unacquainted with it.

I could have wished to exhaust a matter which appeared so extremely curious, but the Colonel, as if his power of exposition were already failing him, hurried me away, and I had barely taken a respectful leave of the Royal Personage before I found myself seated in another small mechanical coach and passing over the ground at a rapid speed. Our destination was an imposing edifice, not altogether unlike those in which we are accustomed to quarter our guardians of public order, although very much more luxurious, and here, after I had regulated various small matters which it would be tedious to enumerate, I was able to obtain a much-needed rest in circumstances very different from any with which I was familiar.

CHAPTER II

The Author gains some knowledge of the manners and customs of Isotaria, and of its Constitution—He visits its Parliament, beholds the children presenting their petition, and attends a session of the Council of War.

I MUST forbear to relate the many singular adventures which befell me during my sojourn in a country so different from my own, since my purpose is rather to describe the manners and customs of its inhabitants than my own unwonted sensations.

I was early introduced into the society of the town through the energy of the worthy Colonel, who attached himself to my side with all the fidelity which a dog is accustomed to extend to a sightless man, and I shall not easily forget one of the first of the social entertainments at which I was privileged to be present. We had passed through a row of servants in splendid apparel and had ascended a magnificent staircase, at the head of which I was presented to the hostess, before I dis-

covered a spectacle which seemed to me as curious as any with which I was then acquainted.

In a spacious apartment, which, however, was by no means large enough to satisfy its purpose, there was assembled a vast throng of my fellow-creatures, amongst whom the women were easily to be distinguished by their cheerful attire, whilst the men were arrayed in the funereal habiliments with which they are accustomed to invest themselves towards nightfall. The company was of the most eminent, and I beheld, beside a multitude of senators, savants, judges, physicians, and men of letters, a general who was too capable in time of war to be of service in time of peace ; a proconsul who had pacified great provinces and received a paper memorial for remembrance ; a politician who had been displaced for making too honest a statement of his opinions ; beside a number of others, whose supporters had replaced them after a long and devoted service by a number of gentlemen that for the better comfort of their persons always travelled to their destination with fine new carpet-bags. I was presented to some of these celebrities, who greeted me with affability and politeness. They greeted me, but they did little

more, for the strong currents that prevail in these places of entertainment quickly bore them away from me, and I observed that persons commonly submitted to be torn from the conversation of their acquaintance without astonishment, and sometimes without regret. They exchanged signals and fired salutes, but the clamour which prevailed on every side effectually precluded the brain from following in the wake of the tongue or the heart from repeating the vagaries of the hand.

I was carried forward into a yet more spacious chamber, where I perceived a number of individuals pirouetting together in pairs, and although they looked hot and uncomfortable, this did not occasion me any surprise, for the music with which they tried to keep measure was played at such a rate as to make their object incapable of attainment, and the room allowed to the performers by the crowd was so confined as to cause them very constantly to collide with one another. One couple in particular attracted my attention. A gentleman of inconsiderable stature had been associated with a lady of handsome proportions, and had thus been reduced to the expedient of revolving round his partner rather than with her. But her vigorous

frame was by no means a disadvantage to him, as she was easily able to repel all attacks directed against their joint stability, and although more than one other partnership fell before them, they were themselves never overturned.

I had read among the memorials of my illustrious ancestor that it was the custom of some human beings to submit to certain corporal adversities for the better regulation of their lives and improvement of their characters, and I supposed at first that it was with this view that these rapid gyrations was performed and these violent shocks sustained. The Colonel, however, who was ever at my disposal, assured me that this was an unfounded supposition, and that the persons I saw were engaged in a most pleasing and graceful diversion.

I had scarcely had time to recover from my astonishment at this discovery when I was presented with much ceremony to a lady, whom, from the manner of my sponsor, I took to be a person of rank and position. With a ready alacrity, that excited my admiration, she relieved the momentary embarrassment which ensued by inviting me to discuss a topic to which I later ascertained this people is very partial; and we were

quickly engaged in a careful and particular investigation into the present state of the atmosphere and its future prospects. I had not, however, completed my observations upon this subject before she surprised me by an inquiry whether I was intending to assist at the ceremony which was to take place on the succeeding day. I acknowledged, not without profuse apology, that I was entirely ignorant of the nature or consequence of the impending event, whereupon she informed me that a Charity Bazaar was immediately to be held under the patronage of the Royal Family. This announcement only tended to increase my confusion since, although I had long been familiar with the name of "charity" and had lately become acquainted with that of "bazaar" (which I took to be a kind of fair carried on under shelter), yet I could not for the life of me divine what connection there might be between two words so apparently dissimilar in meaning. I was consequently obliged to ask for an explanation, which was readily accorded.

It seems that this people, although many of them are possessed of a generous disposition, are also of a very high business capacity, and are not always inclined to assist in

the relief of the sick or the succour of the indigent, unless they can assure themselves of an immediate and visible profit for the yellow metal by means of which their benevolence is bestowed. It has therefore been found necessary to enliven the monotonous tedium of almsgiving by the speculative excitement of commerce, and this is successfully effected by the invaluable invention of the Charity Bazaar.

I did not have the opportunity of inspecting more than one of these institutions, but I was assured that the same plan of operations is pursued in all. A number of persons of high distinction and reputed wealth are persuaded to supply articles of a costly and superfluous character, which, after due warning has been given of the coming event, are collected at an appointed time and place. The persons who desire to assist in the relief of suffering then assemble in their gayest attire, and in exchange for such of these rare and precious objects as may take their fancy distribute the yellow metal, with which they have amply provided themselves. For fear, however, that the intrinsic value of their purchases should leave them the losers in the bargain, royal personages are commonly exhibited towards the commencement of the

fair, and the pleasure of gazing at these superior beings has been found so highly gratifying that no one has ever been known to complain of having been worsted in the transaction. The scale of charges, indeed, is so nicely calculated on these occasions that the cost of entry is often reduced should the Bazaar be prolonged for more days than one, and, in this case, a corresponding reduction is made in the rank and dignity of the persons displayed to the eyes of the vulgar. I could not but admire the ingenuity of this device, which has proved so entirely satisfactory to all parties concerned in it. The poor are provided with the means of relief and the rich with an opportunity for agreeable amusement. Profits are realized, yet the pain which might be experienced at parting with the yellow metal is altogether avoided by the presence of a tangible consideration. I was, however, distressed to perceive that some few of those whom I saw exhibited did not appear to enjoy the situation to which a kindly fate had exposed them. They discharged their duty, indeed, with courtesy and distinction, but I could not but suspect they were of so poor a spirit that they would gladly have surrendered the pride of their position to others of a more

eminent and enterprising nature than themselves.

It must not be supposed that this is an exhaustive account of the charitable enterprise of a mighty nation. With some of it, indeed, I was informed I could never hope to be conversant, since there were persons of a modesty so false as to conceal their charity from the eyes of mankind. But, happily, the principle of co-operation is highly developed, and the societies for mutual assistance are so numerous and so powerful that the reserve which instinct suggests is compelled to submit to the publicity which reason enjoins. The importunity of friends and the applause of the crowd are found to stimulate, and even to implant, a generous sympathy in the hearts of the most indifferent and the most hardened. The welfare of each is discovered to include the welfare of all, and there is hardly a citizen who has not associated himself, or at least his name, with the activities of some society for the improvement or diversion of mankind. It would be impossible for me to enumerate, if, indeed, I could recall, one hundredth part of these associations; but I remember as especially remarkable that one had been founded for protecting children

from the tyranny of their parents, and I was assured that another was in process of formation for relieving parents altogether of the care of their children. Nor was the human race allowed to circumscribe the region of humanity. A hospital had been established to examine and cure the diseases of flies, and a staff of nurses, whose lives were devoted to the care of these humble insects, was supported by public contribution. Even less domesticated animals stood in no danger of neglect, for the race of squirrels, whose teeth were thought to be impaired owing to their ignorance of nut-crackers, had been enabled, through the bounty of a wealthy old lady, to obtain without expense the services of a capable dentist.

I learnt, moreover, that the practice of medicine had of late years made such surprising advances by the introduction of the method of popular discussion that those who supposed themselves to have been relieved of any particular ailment had grown accustomed to describe in the newspapers, with an agreeable and courageous publicity, the character of their complaints and the nature of the appropriate remedies. There was, indeed, hardly a man who could not recommend from experience some particular

and invaluable dietary, and I should infallibly have adopted one myself if I could have found any two prescriptions which agreed together. I heard of one anchoret—for he can scarcely have been less—who had adopted the simplest mode of life, and, forsaking the pleasures of the table and the habitations of men, resided upon the tree-tops with the assistance of a diet of nuts. Another, who seemed to me no less marvellous, had contrived to continue in the society of his fellow-men by confining his means of subsistence to the nutriment afforded by the ox and the cow, and, whilst he fed only upon the flesh of the one, drank nothing but the milk of the other.

The interest which accompanied these singular expedients for the prolongation of existence was reflected in the sober talk of the dining-table and the light raillery of the drawing-room, and I found that many dull or even taciturn persons might be moved to eloquence, or at least conversation, by an inquiry into the nature of their regimen. It was, however, difficult to invert the positions, for they seldom displayed much inclination to be interested in the regimen of others, being for the most part more eager to make converts than to become disciples. The maladies of the mind were

occasionally substituted for those of the body, but these were in less need of discussion, since there is a certain number of devoted servants of the public who constantly place on record their private emotions for the entertainment and instruction of their fellow-creatures, and whose power of self-analysis is so highly developed that it is doubtful whether their character will hold together very much longer owing to the constant and cruel introspection to which their unhappy spirits are subject.

It must not, however, be supposed that the habit of society was so contracted as to forbid the discussion of other matters than these. I was often tempted to divert the conversation towards a matter which I soon perceived to possess a precedence over all the rest. In our own untutored state of society, where the rich are regarded as being as much the originators as the guardians of wealth, and where, after making provision for the maintenance of their families in a decent dignity, they are accustomed to use their wealth, which they regard as a trust, for the relief of such poverty as exists, and the promotion of such fine arts as are known to us, the moral constitution of the world has never required to be considered. But in the

more civilized country with which I had now become acquainted, the perfection of the government and the gradual evolution of the principles of business had enabled a great part of the nation to dispense with the charities and sympathies which had presided over the formation of society, and I could hardly arrive at a decision whether the rich were more anxious to be quit of the poor or the poor of the rich, although I could see pretty clearly that they had little prospect of being able to part company. Some little while after my arrival I had the advantage of hearing the subject exhaustively treated by a hard-headed merchant, who had himself been the architect of his fortune. I had been so unfortunate as to inform him that on one occasion, whilst consuming a luxurious dinner, I had been upon the point of conferring my victuals upon a passing beggar and had only been restrained by the prudence of a friend, who knew better than myself of what stuff beggars are made. I could see that he thought very ill of me for having entertained even for a moment so singular an impulse. He replied, however, with the courtesy common to those who have made it their business to suffer fools gladly, that such conduct as had suggested

itself to me was indeed usual enough in a primitive state of society, but that reflection had demonstrated its folly, and that, although the number of the poor had not sensibly, if at all, declined, the methods of relief were now of a very excellent and discriminating character. I must not, beside, be so unwise as to suppose that liberality or self-denial on the part of the rich would tend to improve the condition of the poor. It was by saving the yellow metal and putting it out at profit that the greatest amount of employment and happiness was conferred on the greatest number of persons, and he added that, although the mischief would be ultimately repaired, he could not deny that if the rich were to forgo their pleasures a vast quantity of persons would no longer be in a position to get a living. He declaimed very loudly against the conduct of some of the societies which gave subsidies to the poor and incapable so as to enable them to compete with the skilful and industrious, and he affirmed that nothing was so impious as to endeavour to reverse that elementary provision of Nature, which implanted in all men the healthy desire to accumulate as much of the yellow metal as might be. In the maintenance and progressive vigour of this

inducement, he informed me that he discerned the advance, the happiness, and even the morality of the human race.

This gentleman appeared to be so conversant with the ways of his countrymen, and so confident of his own conclusions, that I was deeply shocked to be assured a very little while after that his notions were obsolete and his satisfaction with his surroundings altogether misplaced. The country, and for the matter of that, the world, said my companion, who persisted in calling himself my brother (the reason for which I could never at all ascertain), had long been under the tyranny of a class of persons who had been sustained in power by antiquated wiseacres like the *mérchant*. The mischief of centuries was now, he assured me, in a fair way to be undone by himself and his fellow-labourers, and in a few years' time, if I chose to revisit the country, I should behold a land of peace, plenty, and contentment, where all would be occupied with the business of each, and where everyone might hope to crown a long life of placid mediocrity by the undisturbed slumbers of the tomb.

This prospect seemed to me so entirely agreeable that I could not forbear to inquire

what means he proposed to adopt in order to secure it. He assured me that these were of the simplest. He supposed that, so soon as the wealthy perceived the benevolence of his intentions, they would hasten to abandon their properties to himself and his confederates, but that, if this should not prove to be the case, the authority of the State would be unflinchingly used to extirpate the independence of the individual: that all things would be thrown into a common fund, and that everyone would then be allowed to help himself in exact proportion to the effort he supposed himself to be making in the public service. I asked him whether he was likely to be the gainer or the loser by this arrangement, but he evaded my inquiry, the reason of which I was afterwards very well able to understand, for I learnt that he had hardly any possessions at all of his own.

My conversations with these two representative gentlemen made me very curious to know what policy was advised, in a matter so important, by the statesmen, to whom I supposed the formation of public opinion to be entrusted. I learnt, however, that they had not as yet arrived at a decision, and were, indeed, understood to be waiting for their instructions upon the populace, in

whose wisdom they professed the most profound confidence; but that, in the meanwhile, they had contrived to combine the new principles and the old in a most ingenious manner. For there was not one who did not affirm that he was a socialist at heart, but each was careful to commit his individual fortunes to the care of his brain.

Some few months after my arrival, when the weather had once more turned cold, and I began to regret the warmth and sunshine of my native land, I was astonished to observe, as I strolled through the wealthier quarters of the town, that the dimensions of my acquaintance were suddenly and considerably swollen. Many of them had looked prosperous before, but they had now grown to look portly, and even those whom Nature had designed to be thin seemed to exhibit the symptoms of good living. But my surprise rather increased than declined when I encountered soon afterwards a vast troop of unfortunates whose haggard faces and tattered garments seemed to bespeak the last stages of poverty and destitution. They marched in such serried ranks that I did not at first discover that the Comic and the Tragic Muse were alike present among

them, and that beside the withered skeleton of Despair there stalked the stalwart figure of Jollity. Above the crowd there floated a spacious banner, which proclaimed at once their ability and their need.

I could by this time no longer restrain my curiosity, and I addressed myself without delay to the nearest guardian of the public peace. He informed me that the sights I had beheld, although they invited contrast, required rather comparison, and that the wealthy would never have grown to such stupendous proportions if it had not been that the poor were shrunk beyond the ordinary. It appeared that the problem of poverty had of late become unusually urgent, and that the government of the country had been unable to agree upon a remedy. Some of the ministers were desirous to find employment for all who were out of it by substituting their labour for that of the existing workmen, who would thus exchange places with them, to the immediate solution of the difficulty; but others were more favourable to a policy of deliberation and delay. There was, indeed, only one point upon which the Ministry were thoroughly agreed—that the methods of their ancestors were noxious and infantile. It was decided,

therefore, to examine the legislation of the past and to maintain or establish the reverse of it. A patient inquiry revealed the fact that begging had been checked by coercion, and it was therefore resolved that every vagabond should continue absolutely free to do as he pleased. It was further elicited that the self-indulgence of the rich had been checked by laws limiting the delicacy of their food and prescribing the texture of their apparel. The ministry therefore thought well to enact that no man should be allowed to accumulate his wealth for the promotion of enterprise or the inheritance of his children, but, if he wished to be allowed to have the use of it, that he should sit at table for at least six hours each day : that no meal should include less than eight courses, of which seven must be consumed by all present : and that every individual not engaged in manual labour should wear three suits of clothing on his back in winter and two in summer, nor ever leave his house without taking the precaution of putting on two coats, of which one at least must be of a substantial quality. This law had lately come into operation, and I was assured that it had already made some of the rich more uncomfortable about the condition of the poor

than they had ever been before, whilst it had the further advantage of enabling the tribunes of the people to dilate with even more than their accustomed vehemence and vituperation upon the luxury and selfishness of the privileged classes. It was something of a relief to me to learn that, as an alien, I was the subject of a special exemption from the operation of the decree; for the ministers were very partial to aliens, whom they annually introduced into the country in large numbers for the public convenience. I went on to inquire why the crowd of unfortunates whom I now saw had so varied an appearance, some looking wretched and starving, and others hale and even hearty, and my friendly informant advised me that the former were fit objects of compassion, but that the latter were principally knights of the road, who preferred to pass their leisure in the agreeable pastime of parading the streets.

I was more than ever impressed at the conclusion of these inquiries by the resource and invention of the rulers of the country, and I besought the worthy Colonel to lose no time in introducing me to their legislative assembly. But he did not display his usual alacrity in complying with my suggestion,

and only yielded to my insistence on the understanding that he should not be expected to listen to a word of the debate, inasmuch as he had heard or read everything that was being said there a great number of times already. I made no resistance to this modest condition, and was very soon afterwards comfortably accommodated in a gallery where I might enjoy without disturbing the deliberations of the parliament. I saw below me a company of gentlemen, whose easy postures and tired faces bore an eloquent witness to the profound character of the addresses which were delivered to them by some of their number. When one had concluded his remarks, another would get up in the opposite side of the chamber, and speak with equal perspicacity and conviction in an exactly contrary sense; and this process would continue until either the orators were exhausted or the audience satisfied, upon which a poll would be immediately taken, and the proposed law in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand be found to be carried. I supposed that it must be a matter of infinite difficulty to the legislators, and one accountable in a great measure for their jaded aspect, to decide with any nicety of conscience upon

the respective merits of the various arguments proposed to them; but the Colonel assured me that this was no trouble to them at all, for that they had very sensibly pledged their votes on every matter of importance some months or even years before they heard the question discussed. And indeed in this I hold the genius of the nation chiefly to consist, that they have thus, by an astute transposition of the antecedent and its consequence, devised a constitution which preserves all the forms and features of free discussion without any of its inconvenient realities; nor is there any part of my observations which I hold to be more worthy of notice, or which I commend with greater confidence to the respectful consideration of my countrymen.

I was tempted into making some inquiries into the origin and history of a form of government which had been brought to so extraordinary a perfection. It appeared that this people, which is much addicted to athletics, had lately reconstructed its government in the fashion of a pastime, where a number of coloured bladders of all sorts and sizes are first inflated and then exploded with a loud concussion. That, with this model in mind, they had invested one of the two

parties in the state with the duty of blowing bladders, in whose airy forms was deposited the subtle essence of legislation, and the other with that of pricking them when they grew to be great enough. To make sure, however, that none of these ethereal creations should survive but such as should have some chance of standing the hard conditions of the world we live in, and to add something beside to the fun of the game, they had very sensibly maintained a second society of legislators, whose business it was now and again, when an ill-constructed bladder reached them, to put a little knife or other sharp instrument into it and toss it back upon the heads of the Bladder-Blowers, and, as in the course of the descent the steel would commonly pierce the body of the bag, this mischievous frolic sometimes resulted in the loss of a plaything in which many persons had invested the contents of their lungs. The people, however, are, as a rule, very indifferent to the fate of the bladders, regarding legislation, as I say, rather in the light of a game. But (to prolong the metaphor to the end) sometimes the Bladder-Blowers will be too cunning for them and will deceive them into believing that there is something more in the bag than gas.

I learnt that the first body of legislators was selected by the vote of the community, and the great question that was then agitating the public mind had reference to the extension of the suffrage. It appeared that a short time before the women of the nation had asserted their proper claim to take part in the choice of their governors, and after a brief but tumultuous war had obtained the recognition of their rights. This successful vindication of justice and humanity had provoked the children to emulate the heroism of their female relations, and to demand that they should share the privileges of the matron and the spinster. The new movement secured the fiery dialectic of the logician and the benevolent indifference of mankind, but, although this will not be easily credited, it failed to arouse the sentimental emotions of the mother and the aunt. Those who had been so lately the advocates of equality and emancipation became the stern opponents of concession and change, and it was necessary for the pioneers of freedom to adopt the instruments of violence. The children were that very day to present their plea to the assembled statesmen, but it was generally known that their petition would be forcibly

opposed by the worthy descendants of Juno and Minerva.

The excellent Colonel, who scented the battle from afar with the eager zest attributed to the war-horse, hurried me from the Halls of Peace to the Fields of Mars, nor did I regret his enthusiasm, since it enabled me to behold the spectacle of a sanguinary conflict without danger and without discomfort. Below me and guarding the entrance to the Chamber, I perceived a gathering of sturdy matrons, whose set faces and strident tongues witnessed to their determination to submit to the disorder of their persons rather than to the defeat of their cause; whilst beyond them there spread an innumerable array of children of all sorts and sizes, whose eager and courageous bearing declared the importance of their enterprise. They were entering the square from every street, and even the purlieus and the alleys were providing their quota. High in the heavens floated a lofty banner, emblazoned with a device which represented a concourse of mothers administering chastisement to infants whose enfeebled frames spoke of insufficient rations, whilst their stunted limbs bore the impress of heavy chains.

I looked to see the nature of the arms

carried by the combatants. The women, so far as I could judge, relied upon nothing but their well-developed muscles, and I could not but think them very improvident, since the children were suitably provided with the accoutrements and ammunition of the nursery. The boys carried catapults, whips, bows and arrows, miniature guns, and the empty cases of their parents' sporting-cartridges; the girls relied on the dreadful weapons with which Nature had endowed the tips of their fingers. The territorial regiments were armed with the implements of the garden, and the hoe and the rake did good service before the day was done. The yeomanry bestrode their rocking-horses, their bodies protected by breast-plates and their heads shielded by helmets. Every child had some weapon of offence, and great things seemed to be expected from the rattles which the infants, emboldened by an appropriate banner representing an ancient warrior waving the jaw-bone of an ass, brandished with a sanguinary and unnatural ardour.

I had barely completed my examination of the troops when I perceived that battle had been joined. The children advanced in their thousands towards the guarded entrance,

and it was in vain that the matrons, tormented by the arrows, stones, pellets and peas which fell around them like hail, abstracted the weapons and imprisoned the persons of their nearest opponents. The missiles were soon recovered, and the apron-strings, which had served as ropes, were quickly snapped by the frantic struggles of the frenzied champions of the rights of childhood. The combat indeed was prolonged; but it was clear that the matrons must eventually have fallen back and the position been carried, had not an alarming development taken place. A cohort of spinsters had been placed among the reserves, and these terrible ladies advanced at this desperate crisis to the succour of their married sisters. As they hurried to the front they detached from their head-dress a gleaming weapon, and great was my horror when I perceived that they proposed to war with the points of these dangerous daggers. I thought of the dire vengeance of Hecuba upon the children of Polymnestor, and each moment I feared to see the orbs of the daring vanguard of liberty pierced by the ruthless hands of these ministers of darkness. But before they could touch their victims there came a movement from the flank which surprised

both the parties of attack and defence. A host of women, clad in white from head to foot and pushing little carriages before them, rushed with incredible swiftness to the rescue, or perhaps I should say the rout, for the children fled at the sight of the carriages very much as the Roman legionaries are reported to have fled before the elephants of Pyrrhus. In a moment there was a scene of the wildest confusion, redeemed only by the wonderful dexterity of the white-clad women, whose numbers were scarcely inferior to those of the children. Child after child was captured, placed in a carriage and confined in a recumbent posture by the use of straps. In a few minutes the leaders had all been seized, and the main body of petitioners, deprived of their generals, surrendered at discretion. The day had been won, but neither the gallant army of advance nor the stalwart army of defence could lay claim to the victory.

Such are the anxieties of a mighty people and the preoccupations of an illustrious legislature.

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The Colonel, whose bellicose proclivities were still unsatisfied, inquired, as we took our way homewards, whether I would not be

glad to banish the smell of gas, with which he assured me I must certainly have been saturated in the chamber of the Bladder-Blowers, by visiting the office where the administration of the army was regulated with great circumspection and sagacity. I readily gave my assent to so amiable a proposal, and he then introduced me to a room in which several elderly gentlemen, habited in red coats and of a despondent appearance, were gazing at a large map of the country, upon which was marked in several localities the word *Invasion*. Upon the surface of the atlas there were spread little troops of tin soldiers, and beside each troop was inscribed a figure indicating the cost of its maintenance. The company, which was very glum, was too absorbed to make much of our entrance. We had not, however, been long in the room, when a person, dressed in the sombre attire that is commonly affected, entered it and seated himself opposite to the others. He looked upon them very kindly, talking to them all the while in a smooth and agreeable manner, and after a time he pulled out several long weeds, one of which he tendered to each person. The smoke of these weeds the inhabitants are accustomed to inhale after they have set fire

to them. They declare that this is productive of the most agreeable sensations, and I am inclined to suppose that it is so, for the faces of the gentlemen in red grew more cheerful in proportion as they experienced the soothing vapours of the tobacco. I observed that their companion in the meanwhile was busied with removing several of the little troops of soldiers and obliterating the figures attached to them, together with the word *Invasion*, to which he appeared to entertain an unreasonable dislike. When they perceived what he had done they rubbed their eyes a little; but he bowed to them very courteously and glided away, and they seemed not at all discontented with his proceedings.

The Colonel then informed me that I had had the privilege of attending a very important session of the Council of War, and inquired whether I did not think that his countrymen managed the government of the army with much greater facility and expedition than the government of the State. I assured him that this was certainly my opinion, and that I should always consider the sight he had shown me as one of the most notable monuments of the genius of the nation and the capacity of the Ministers.

CHAPTER III

The Author makes some inquiries about the religion and education of the Isotarians, and visits the Isle of Saints.

I WAS by this time much moved by the humour and wisdom of a people with whom I was so fortunate as to be able to lay some claim to kinship, and I desired nothing more than to examine the foundations of the national character and discover for myself the basis upon which so splendid a structure had been raised. To this end I made so bold as to inquire of my honest friend what might be the religious opinions which were commonly received. He did not immediately reply to my question, but, after some reflection, informed me that he was forced to confess that he did not very well know how to answer it. He had, he said, always conformed to the religion of his parents and his countrymen, and he would be ready to offer the stoutest opposition to any attack upon the Established Church, which he regarded as a bulwark against Nonconformity and a

guarantee of public order and decency, but he had never presumed either to penetrate the mysteries of statistics or to invade the province allotted to the parsons.

The works of my famous progenitor had fortunately enabled me to apprehend some part of his meaning, and his expressions did not therefore present the difficulty which would certainly have been experienced by a complete stranger to the phraseology of the language. It may, however, be useful to my countrymen to know that the Established Church is that community of religious which is persecuted by the Government; that a Nonconformist is a kind of political agitator; that Statistics are an ethereal preparation of facts distilled by the volition of an enthusiast; and that a Parson is a creature of circumstance, who supplies the baser sort among his flock with a butt and the better with a beggar. I only compiled these definitions after particular inquiry, and am confident that they represent, as near as is possible, the present meaning of the terms.

The Colonel lost no time in repairing his own deficiencies as well as he might, and I was soon made acquainted with a gentleman who had devoted his life to the study of religious opinion. This learned philosopher

assured me that my question was indeed a difficult one, because the more he studied the matter the more impossible he found it to determine of what belief were the most part of his countrymen. He said that those who professed the traditional faith scarcely seemed to understand the extent of the obligations to which they gave in their adhesion, whilst many who denied it were in the habit of regulating their conduct by its tenets. In this manner there sometimes resulted a sad confusion, since the lives of a number of the believers belied their convictions and the convictions of a good part of the infidels belied their lives, and he added that he himself, after long years of patient industry, was unable to affirm anything at all, except that, in the words of an ancient poet,

“The world was out of joint.”

He went on to say that a remarkable man who had already retained the attention of his contemporaries for nine days, and expected to retain it longer, had lately engaged to reconcile the faith of ages with the necessities, or at least the convenience, of the age—to the great comfort of that part of the populace which was of opinion that every-

thing that was new was also true. And he proposed that I should accompany him to the building where this clever fellow was accustomed to deliver his teaching, to which proposal I readily assented.

A few days later we set out, accompanied by the Colonel. The place of our destination was already besieged by a multitude whom the philosopher, from an experience stimulated and enlightened by the study of history, assured me would never have come there but for the singularity of the preacher's opinions. Fortunately, I was in the company of a person of some consequence, and as our passage through the crowd was assisted by the arm of authority and the homage of respect, we found ourselves conveniently lodged in a position where it was possible to gratify the desires both of the eye and the ear.

I must not attempt to describe that part of the service which preceded the discourse, as I am unskilled in the language of devotion and should be greatly distressed if I were unwittingly guilty of anything which might be characterized as irreverence. But as soon as the preacher had mounted his rostrum, I became immediately attentive; and this, I observed, was also the case with the majority

of those present. He spoke with a certain innocence, and, incredible as it may seem to my countrymen, was, I think, pretty nearly convinced of the plausibility of his remarks. Revealed religion, he said, was about to undergo a momentous and important development. It had been too long represented as the particular property of men who were pledged to grant no terms to the world except such as were the equivalent of unconditional surrender. But since, after many centuries, the world still remained unconquered and showed, indeed, no signs of suing for peace, it was evident that Revelation must abate its pretensions and concede such terms as the world was willing to accept. It might be said that it was the proper privilege of Providence to dictate to mankind the preliminaries of a treaty, and not of mankind to despatch an ultimatum to Providence. But this, he assured us, was a very false opinion, and one not likely to be entertained by those who were conversant with the recent advances of scientific knowledge. For it had lately been discovered that men were not only naturally good, but gifted of their own nature with divinity and capable by a full development of their faculties of realizing not so much the Design as the Being of Pro-

vidence; that moral deformity was no more than unsuccessful endeavour after one's better self; and that no one who did not place his possessions at the disposal of every sorry fellow, that had a fancy to try his luck in some manner or other at another man's expense, might live any longer in the peace of a good conscience.

I must not attempt any further to represent a learned discourse which I may have imperfectly apprehended since I fancied I could perceive that the preacher himself was not a little overpowered by the novelty of his thoughts and the magnitude of his conclusions. I feel confident, however, that in this, as in so many other matters, my kinsmen have the advantage of us, since there is little in the severe and simple faith of Callimago to suggest the magnificent optimism and comfortable assurance of the religion of Isotaria, or to provoke us to expect an immediate, or even a distant, apotheosis of our persons.

These sentiments, however, found no echo in the breast of the excellent Colonel, whose heated countenance and fiery words but feebly reflected the passions that surged within his head. I must not attempt to recall the epithets with which he belaboured

the unfortunate preacher, but I remember that he said that the folly of supposing there was no Providence was exceeded by the folly of constructing a Providence after one's own fancy. The philosopher, whose industrious researches had taught him the value of moderation in deciding upon the merits of a popular favourite, endeavoured to pacify the rage of his companion by enlarging upon the excellence of charity and the merits of forbearance. And he added, perhaps incautiously, that the preacher was at least no more culpable than some other divines, who were accustomed to affirm very solemnly, every night and morning, certain opinions upon which they did not hesitate to cast doubt and even denial in the publicity of the pulpit or the press. Upon this the Colonel grew more angry than before, and declared that these unhappy individuals deserved no more quarter than the deserters from an army or the betrayers of a fortress. The philosopher, whom Reason forbade to emulate the violence of his opponent, observed very quietly that this was indeed the case, and that the persons, he had mentioned would doubtless have perished as traitors by the code of the soldier and have been condemned for perjury by the justice of the

civilian. But, as he proceeded to remark, they had wisely reserved their subtle equivocations for the service of Providence, and since their particular dishonesties in that profession in no way interfered with the transaction of the business of the world, mankind was generally content to tolerate and even to connive at vagaries, which the public conscience found it necessary to condemn when they endangered the interest or the property of human beings. It was, moreover, evident that the piquancy of the situation would be greatly diminished if the divines were shorn of their dignities, since their ingenious surmises would then be discovered to be no more than common rationalism and they themselves might be seen to be of no greater consequence than the vulgar whom they affected to enlighten.

I could see that the honest Colonel was but little moved by the profound reflections of the philosopher ; but he preserved a severe silence, which I think he supposed to be more eloquent than any words he could command.

I was very well satisfied to recognize the embodiment of Reason in the person of the philosopher, and to see how easily the generous sympathies of learning had con-

founded the ill-considered instincts of the unlettered soldier. I took every opportunity of improving my acquaintance with a man whose passions were so few and whose judgment was so nicely balanced, and I was able to derive from him a vast amount of knowledge, the product of long years of exact and impartial observation. I prevailed upon him to escort me to an academy, where he was good enough to present me to some of his brother philosophers, who were engaged in debating the nature of Truth. I was astonished to hear that a matter so important had not yet been determined; but they assured me that it was discovered by discussion, and that it would unquestionably emerge from their deliberations in a very few years from the present time; as the debate had already lasted so long that it involved a logical fallacy to suppose it could last any longer. I inquired how they contrived to impart the knowledge of truth to others when they had so imperfect an acquaintance with its meaning themselves, but they informed me that this was not a matter which presented the slightest difficulty. They reminded me that the parent of systematic philosophy had discovered the secret of success in life to consist in the

maintenance of a *mean*; and they pointed out that this doctrine was capable of a valuable extension which had not been suspected by its inventor. They said that it could not be doubted that Truth and Error were both extremes, and that it was evident that we were intended to find the mean state between them in order to acquire intellectual repose. That it was plain that this mean state was that which is commonly called Doubt, and that the system of education must be calculated to produce this happy condition at the earliest possible age. That when a boy was put to school a number of gentlemen in black coats were therefore appointed to instruct him, but that, so soon as the boy was arrived at the academy, he was transferred to the care of the philosophers, who set themselves to sharpen his critical sense by cutting up before his eyes the remains of all the philosophers that have ever existed, until he was fully convinced that all men were liars and that there was no better amusement in the world than to make fun of the beliefs, convictions or ideals of anyone that had them. That whilst he was in this kind of temper he was shown that it was impossible to get on in the world without convictions and that

he had best acquire them as fast as he might. That in this manner he was brought to have that exact nice balance of mind which some called Doubt and others Indifference, and a very wholesome race of citizens put forth every year from the academy, who gave their services to the public, but kept their opinions to themselves. The philosophers went on to say that there were some who denied themselves instruction by taking abundance of athletic exercise, which enabled them to put a check upon their excessive lust for learning, and that these were obliged to discover their opinions by the help of their ancestry or their advantage. That it did not seem possible to determine which of the two methods was the more successful, since both were very well adapted to the formation of Doubt; but that they were disposed to give a preference to the former, both because they had invented it themselves and because it seemed better calculated to promote broad-mindedness and provide good conversation.

I left the philosophers disputing whether Truth were the image or the fibre of Reality. But, although they were cutting to pieces each other's arguments, I was in no fear they would take to cutting each other's throats;

for they are a very peaceable sort of folk and live in the greatest charity among themselves, so long as no one tempt them to review each other's books (which indeed is an offence about to be forbidden by law).

On the next morning I set out for the Isle of Saints, which I had happened to hear them mention and was very curious to see. It appeared that this island, which lies to the west of Isotaria, had recently regained its original name; this having fallen into disuse for several centuries, owing to its singular inappropriateness to the character of the inhabitants. For a league of philanthropists, or Young Isotarians as they called themselves, who had made some study of the nature of man and were of opinion that the inhabitants had forfeited their style through no fault of their own, had obtained the permission of the Government to convert the island into a sort of practice-ground or nursery-garden for the civic ideals which they had at heart, and, the help of the men of science being obtained, had towed it out into the middle of the Atlantic, so that the experiment might proceed without interference.

The framework of the government was ordered in accordance with the Rights of

Man, and it was laid down as a fundamental principle of the Constitution that no one did wrong by his own fault and that no one might be arrested or punished for any offence against his neighbours. In view of this enactment it was decided to abolish the police and the prisons, which had formerly been a great source of unproductive expenditure.

In the next clause of the Declaration it was affirmed that all men were equal, or that, if they were not, they were meant to be, and that if there should happen to be any appearance of inequality this must be immediately rectified. The execution of this law necessitated the creation of a great company of valuers, who redistributed the land and goods of the community every time a child was born, which was not an infrequent occurrence. But the equalization of property by no means satisfied the principles of equity, and a large number of surgeons were paid by the State to reduce all persons who appeared possessed of physical strength above the ordinary to the level of the weakest manual labourers in the republic, so that all might start fair in the race of life. Nor did the matter end here. For, as it was

found that the possession of a clear head enabled a man quickly to get the better of his contemporaries, the philosophers were called into council, and any young man who did himself credit in their examinations was forthwith brought to the surgeons to suffer the excision of part of his brain. In this manner a universal mediocrity of body and mind was obtained, whilst the official business connected with the valuation of the land, the amputation of limbs, and the testing and stupefying of brains supplied the greater part of the population with an industry which was in no danger of suffering from foreign competition. I must not forget to add that the limbs, brains, or other sections of the body which had been extracted from the natural possessors were sold in gross to the medical students in Isotaria, and formed a principal source of revenue for the Islanders.

It would be tedious if I were to enumerate all the other devices by which the League of Young Isotarians promoted the welfare of the new commonwealth. But if anyone be curious, he cannot do better than study some parts of the Republic of Plato, whom the Isotarians held in great veneration, and all of whose precepts they had by heart except

the principal one, which is to mind one's own business.*

I remained a good while in the Island so as to observe the effect of a government as beneficent as it was mild. But it must not be supposed that in a world like ours even the best-planned schemes will operate without a flaw. One of the most distressing disasters which befell the Young Isotarians was the extreme difficulty which they presently experienced in inducing any man to occupy the place of President of their Republic. At the first the matter had been easy, but, as no man was held to be unhappy by his own fault or improvident by his own thriftlessness, those who fell into any distress of mind or body took to avenging themselves upon the Head of the State for the injustice done them by the Society. After several noted Isotarians had in this manner lost their lives, without any penalty being paid for the murder, it was found necessary to appoint the assassins themselves to the vacant honour without liberty of refusal, since nobody else could be persuaded to take it.

There was another matter in which the Government was scarcely more fortunate.

* [τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν.—ED.]

It had been part of the original agreement by which the Isotarians had been entrusted with the control of the Island that they should, so soon as the constitution was well set up, call together a national convention to confirm it. But here a terrible cleavage was suddenly disclosed in the ranks of the Young Isotarian philosophers, with whom it rested to effect an equitable distribution of the suffrage. They were, indeed, agreed that all must have it, but it was in the discovery of the individual voter that the trouble arose. For the Idealists among them believed that individuality was synonymous with purpose or character and that no one was to be reckoned an individual who could not show both that he had an aim in life and that this aim was a good one. But the most part of them were Materialists, and supposed that a body (or at least a full-grown body) with an unbroken contour was the symbol of individuality and the necessary qualification for a vote. And here again there was a division, for some were found to maintain that those who had been deprived of legs or arms by the surgeons had lost their title to the suffrage by reason of the breaches in their original circumference; but these were pretty quickly extinguished

by the cripples themselves, who set upon them with their hooks and crutches, and, whilst their individual identity was still in dispute, proved their possession of corporate vitality. I cannot tell how the matter would have ended, for the populace were of another opinion to either body of philosophers, and, being now fed by the community and prohibited from working more than two or three hours in the day so that they were obliged to spend their spare time in conversation, upheld the view, which seemed to me sensible enough, that the possession of a mouth, since it contained a tongue and a palate, was the best certificate of individuality that could possibly be devised.

The peaceful speculations of philosophy would, however, have doubtless been presently brought to a conclusion if a more urgent question had not arisen to disturb them. Owing to the gradual decline of enterprise and industry which attended the reduced standard of physical and mental vigour, it was decided to relieve the distress through a scheme for afforestation, and those who were out of work (and these were the best part of the nation) were despatched to plant trees in a distant part of the Island. But the people were now become so stupid,

in part from the insufficient nourishment afforded by the diet of sour milk and grapes which their rulers prescribed for them, and in part from the progressive poll-taxes to which they were subjected, that they mistook the order, and began instead to cut down trees, the branches of which they fashioned from long habit into shillelaghs. And now, recollecting all the ancient animosity that had existed between the followers of Peter and Jack,* although they could not for the life of them have explained in what it consisted, they took to belabouring one another with all the strength that was left them. This foolish outburst of passion set the country aflame, and I began to doubt if I should escape with my life, until I learnt that the Young Isotarians were putting to sea immediately. I begged them to take me with them, which they consented to do provided I made all the haste imaginable.

* [The reference here seems to be "A Tale of a Tub," a work ascribed by some to Mr. Lemuel Gulliver.—ED.]

CHAPTER IV

The Author gives some account of the inventions of the Isotarians, and unexpectedly returns home.

THE manufactures of the Isle of Saints had appeared so generally stagnant that there was nothing that amused me better on my return to Isotaria than to walk into the shops and look at the articles displayed in them. I was invited one day to visit an exhibition, where a vast number of new inventions were displayed to the curious eyes of the public. Many of these have escaped my recollection ; and there are others which I should be at a loss to describe, not having myself any mechanical skill nor any facility in supplying the deficiencies of the memory by the processes of the imagination. One or two, however, were of so ingenious and valuable a character that no obstacles must deter me from noticing them.

There was a machine designed for the further convenience of mendicants, advertisers and philanthropists, which was calculated to discharge advertisements, begging-

letters, or pamphlets at the rate of one thousand in every minute ; and it was proposed to erect some of these at the entrance to every public building and place of recreation or amusement ; which would easily be allowed by the management for a small consideration. Whenever the public were admitted the engines would be set in motion, and multitudes, or rather myriads, of leaflets, notices, and applications would be instantly liberated from confinement and would fall upon the heads of the passers-by like gentle rain ; whilst, as each separate paper was provided with a solution of gum, it was confidently anticipated that it would adhere to the hats, faces, or clothing of all persons within range. In order to resume their natural appearance, these would be obliged to remove the numerous parasites which clung to their garments, and in making the necessary effort it appeared almost certain that they would be compelled to peruse at least some part of them. In this way a great advantage would be secured over the prevailing method of delivering the documents, which allowed the recipient the opportunity of putting them unread into the fire, whilst it inflicted a considerable expense upon the sender.

Another device which attracted my admiration was one for the dissemination of knowledge and the gratification of curiosity. This consisted in a rational costume adapted to the requirements of either sex, and embracing an open shirt-front behind as well as before. On the latter, which was reserved to the pursuit of the more elementary parts of social science, were inscribed the answers to all the ordinary questions which the people put to one another, such as, how they do, where they have been, where they are going, what they think of the prospects of the weather or the crops, whether they do not suppose the country to be going to the dogs, whether there has ever been such a pack of scoundrels as the Ministry now in power, and so forth. But on the shirt-front which hung behind were set down the answers to those questions which it required more effrontery to put or more tact to discover, such as what a man was worth, or, in the case of a barrister, what he was making, or, if the wearer were an author, what he was writing, or, if it were a woman, whether she had been in gaol for her convictions, or, in case it were an advanced politician, how soon he stood in hope of being decorated with a title. I was much taken with a plan,

which enabled all the innocent preliminaries of conversation to be exchanged without a word and gratified the general curiosity on more important matters without causing any kind of trouble or annoyance to the person chiefly concerned, and I complimented the manager of the exhibition very heartily upon its cleverness. He assured me, however, that he regarded this as a very trifling achievement, and I soon perceived from his conversation that he was a man of infinite resource. For he supposed that we were as yet very backward in making use of the by-products of civilization, and had some very plausible projects for extracting moonbeams out of lunatics, nonsense out of newspapers, judgment out of genius, and a gentleman out of a jackanapes.

I noticed another machine, around which was gathered a great company of sportsmen, who were conversing in loud, and even angry, voices. It appeared that the number of noxious birds in the country had lately increased to so great an extent that, although those appointed to kill them were now assisted by two attendants, armed with three quick-firing weapons and supported by a seat, they were still unable to secure immunity for the annual crops of corn that

were required for the subsistence of mankind. In this alarming crisis in the history of the human race, several immense cannon had been constructed, which were designed for the ejection of a species of shot called—if I remember rightly—shrapnel or something of the sort. These were to be placed at twenty-five yards distance from one another, around the covert to be drawn, and were to be directed upwards towards the sky. So soon as the heavens were darkened with the cloud of birds, which would be dislodged from the wood by confederate sportsmen, the contents of the cannon were to be exploded, and it was calculated that at the lowest estimate not less than one thousand of the noxious depredators must fall to each gun. This procedure was to be repeated about five times, after which it was believed that the neighbourhood would be delivered from the pestilence.

I observed that the elder sportsmen, who were obstinately conservative by nature, were very much opposed to the new invention, and roundly abused it. But the younger men, who saw that progress in this matter as in all the rest was necessary and, indeed, desirable, supported it with the powerful

dialectic supplied by a liberal education. There was one point in particular which they affirmed they would never relinquish. The carriages of the cannon had been fitted with armchairs, by which the sportsmen were enabled to mitigate the fatigue of waiting for the game, and they declared that nothing should induce them to forgo so valuable an addition to the comfort of the sport and the convenience of the luncheon. They argued with a great show of reason that they devoted the whole of their time to the extirpation of game, to which act of self-denial the elder sportsmen could make no pretence, and that they were therefore entitled to claim every possible mitigation of their arduous labours. I was unfortunately unable to remain to the conclusion of the dispute, which was conducted by both parties with much animation and ingenuity, since my guide was very desirous to show me another and even more wonderful invention.

This I can only describe by comparing it to a ship with wings at the sides. The purpose of the monster was to enable mankind to vie with the birds, whose airy movements had excited the envy of their cumbrous, two-footed relatives. I was

assured that much of the best talent in the world, together with a vast quantity of the yellow metal, had been invested in the accomplishment of this stupendous undertaking, and that, after many years of disappointment, a machine had been constructed which was calculated to destroy whole cities in time of war, beside the last remnant of privacy in time of peace: that this discovery had given great satisfaction to all who were interested in the progress and perfection of the human race: and that the highest honours were about to be conferred upon the fortunate benefactors of mankind.

I was desirous to make a trial of the marvellous invention, which, as my curiosity was very much excited, I proceeded to enter. But by some mischance, before anyone could follow me, I touched a spring which caused the air-ship* to rise from the ground with great rapidity, and I very soon found myself flying through the air at a pace which might have aroused the envy of the swiftest of the feathered tribe. The perils of my former voyage by sea began to appear small in

* [The terminology is again at fault, but I have thought it better to retain the literal rendering of the original.—ED.]

comparison with those which now beset me. I had no knowledge of the machinery of my vessel, nor could I discover that it had been furnished with any provisions. But these were the least of my anxieties, for had the ship continued to rise I must have fainted from the increasing rarefaction of the atmosphere. I was, however, relieved to find that the vessel showed no disposition to ascend above a certain height, which I supposed due to the compulsion of the heavy body below it, and after a time my advance became a horizontal one. I now began to reflect that if I could stop the constant flapping of the wings, I should be sure to descend towards the earth. As, however, I perceived that there was nothing but sea below me, I delayed my attempt until land came into sight, when I slipped a small mast across the vessel, so that it lay under the wings and greatly diminished their power of motion. The ship now began to sink rapidly at an angle of about 45 degrees, and must have appeared like a large hawk swooping upon its prey. It came to ground at last with a heavy shock, but I had fortunately prepared myself for this beforehand and was partly protected by the luxurious cushions with which the cabin was provided. I sprang from

my shelter with as much haste as I could, and was astonished to find that the configuration of the ground seemed familiar. I had, in fact, by the disposition of Providence, alighted upon a part of Callimago, and was at no great distance from the abode of my family, who were overcome with delight at my return. I must not, however, intrude my domestic affairs upon the attention of the courteous reader, whose benevolence I have so long and so severely abused. Nor is it perhaps necessary for me to add—since the matter is very generally known—that the air-ship was destroyed by the command of our venerated Sovereign, as being unsuited to the climate of his dominions or the temper of his people. His Majesty, whose wisdom and enlightenment are the pride of his subjects, listened with great attention to the narrative of my adventures, which I repeated as near as I could in the same terms that I have used above, and desired me to publish my journal for the information and entertainment of my countrymen. But he was graciously pleased to add that he did not at present anticipate that it would be possible to adopt the manners and institutions I had described, since careful reflection had convinced him that in Callimago the charms of

society are precluded by the claims of friendship, politics by the homogeneous aspirations of a united people, and philosophy by the unambitious fidelity of the nation to the religious experience of the past.

IN MEMORY OF THE REV. WILLIAM
COLLINS

READER, has it ever happened to you to fall into a melancholy in front of that most pious, simple, and ordinary of social obligations—the composition of a *Collins*? For this is a matter requiring a greater stock of wit and wisdom than any other I am acquainted with, and has, I verily believe, made a greater number of aching heads than any mental exercise known to Humanity before the recent scheme for the valuation of land. Are you still in doubt as to what a *Collins* may be? You know it perhaps by some other name! You describe it as fireworks, or by the aid of some current vulgarism of which, as King James would have said, ‘it is my hard hap not to have heard.’ But in classical English the thing I speak of is a *Collins*, and shall never pass by another title.

The origin of the term is itself an eloquent sermon on the great importance of little

things. When Mr. Collins visited his fair cousins, the Bennets, at Longbourn and vowed to write them a letter of gratitude, how little he dreamed that he was inaugurating a custom which would run like a fiery cross along the topmost beacons of society, and would doubtless, had she only lived long enough, have been accepted by the great Lady Catherine de Bourgh herself! In memory of Mr. Collins, many hundreds of accomplished ladies and gentleman devote what our Continental neighbours would call a *mauvais quart d'heure* every week to the composition of a flowery and impassioned record of their emotions during the previous Sunday. I have no heart to describe their sufferings. Scarce either of my ears will listen to their asseverations. And if my tongue should seem to utter their secrets, it is that I may procure them some alleviation of their pains.

For myself, indeed, I am too hopeless a dullard to bemoan my failures in this sort of literature. I was born without imagination or invention. A large-hearted, expansive style of writing is not in my philosophy. I am obstinately precise in my statements. My speech is rude; I can say no more than I mean. I profess myself a disciple of Cor-

delia. I will have no extravagance upon my conscience. I am content to be a churl if I can but be sure of my sincerity.

My acquaintance are for the most part more chivalrous than myself. They shrink from giving pain. They would sooner wound a sensitive conscience than a sensitive woman. They express themselves as the occasion requires. They pay their debts to the uttermost farthing and suppose the proper discount made for depreciation of coinage. But I am disposed to think women the more dangerous in the matter. They devise as many fine distinctions and profound subtleties as the school-men. I have seen them sitting together and solemnly debating what they call 'the truth and politeness question' with as much adroit casuistry as a conclave of old-world Jesuits. They will clear their consciences by asseverating that they meant what they wrote at the moment, and will very conveniently forget that they were meaning to mean it the moment before. Yet for all this they are hardly to be persuaded that their sex has not a monopoly of deception, and make it an article of faith that a man is as good as his word. There exists, in fact, no linguistic freemasonry between the two halves of the

world, and correspondence between them requires to be carried on with infinite circumspection lest it should produce irreparable mischief.

A friend of mine, for whom I cherish a high regard, knowing him to be every inch a gentleman, confided to me that he had entered society in the firm conviction that these despatches were mere diplomatic conventions, to be set in the same category with formal regrets at the happy necessity of being compelled to decline disagreeable invitations, and that he was for long accustomed to write them in the free and easy style which he conceived proper to their contents. One dreadful morning the veil was withdrawn from his eyes. A lady, touched by these violent but, alas! exaggerated demonstrations of gratitude, wrote to advise him that though she was not in the habit of replying to such communications, his own were worded with such rare delicacy and feeling that she could not refrain from assuring him of her reciprocal satisfaction at his visit.

What an impossible situation to set straight! The excellent gentleman, in all other matters honest as the day, betrayed by mere ignorance of feminine credulity into

fraudulent assurances which had deceived a lady and a benefactress! Explanations wholly impossible! Visits, doubtless, largely multiplied! *Collinses*, perforce not less vigorous than their predecessors, augmenting the lady's innocent happiness with increasing frequency! What demon had presided over the composition of that first charming little letter which had been the undoing of my friend's integrity?

This distressing little comedy is no doubt played out with casual variations far more commonly than we dare to discover. But suspicions are everywhere rife, and it is no longer possible to allay them. Our predicament is appalling. We cannot distinguish true friends from false, and real pleasure, really very often experienced, has become inexpressible. Delight, conveying properly the suggestion of a gentleman tempted by excess of joy into the execution of capers and high jinks, has become the familiar of all expressions of gratitude, and the Complete Letter Writer is hardly better able to hold its own than old Colonel Bogey on the golf-course.

I had intended when I began to propose a remedy for this state of affairs, which was no other than the utter abolition of the *Collins*.

But, indeed, I have no heart for the enterprise. If Mr. Collins were alive I would break a lance with him, but I will not assassinate a reputation. It were more generous to compose an inscription for the monument, which I am advised is to be set up at his approaching centenary :

“Erected by the favour of Lady Catherine de Bourgh in memory of the Reverend William Collins, sometime a beneficed clergyman of the Established Church, who abounded in those domestic virtues which elicit the affection of a wife and promote the confidence of a friend. In his own day a luminary of the parish of Rosings; since his death an orb of the world of fashion. He introduced to his countrymen the custom of epistolary expressions of social gratitude, by means of which he effected a revolution in their manners and morals, and grew to a proper stature in his niche in the Temple of Fame.”

MRS. BATTLE'S OPINIONS ON BRIDGE

I WAS presented to Mrs. Battle last year at an evening party, or, as she persisted in calling it, a rout. It was, if I recollect rightly, the second of November, and there were a number of pleasant people in the room, whom one did not meet every day. Among them I recognized a certain Mr. Lamb, who appeared to have revived the obsolete rôle of master of the ceremonies for his own especial benefit. He played his part with a ready grace which altogether delighted me. No sooner had I entered than he came forward, and, after making me a quaint little bow and inquiring how I did, asked if he might make me acquainted with Mrs. Sarah Battle. I replied that there was no honour of which I should be more proud, and without further ado was led into the presence of that redoubtable lady. Her looks in no way belied my anticipations. Her hair had a thin coating of powder, her nose was curved and well calculated to carry her spectacles, her lips were tightly com-

pressed, and her chin was firm and prominent: yet a shrewd kindliness lurked in her eye, and her cheeks were not so faded but that animation would bring a flush into them. In a word, she was a woman who, with the help of the snuff-box she held in her hand, played the game of life with as great a zest as ever she put into any game of whist.

"Madam," said Mr. Lamb, "I have a gentleman here who is desirous to have the privilege of your acquaintance."

"Sir," said Mrs. Battle, not, I thought, without a trace of irony, "I am happy to make the acquaintance of any gentleman who does me so great an honour."

Mr. Lamb flitted away, and I was left to enter the lists on my own behalf, for that I had a duel to fight Mrs. Battle had left me in no manner of doubt.

"Madam," I said, "your name has long been familiar to me and to my generation on account of some very valuable opinions which you were good enough many years ago to deliver on the subject of whist."

"And what concern, sir, if I may ask," said Mrs. Battle, "have you or your fellows with anybody's opinions on whist? If I mistake not, you have not played a rubber for close upon ten years."

"Mrs. Battle," I replied, "I play a rubber every evening of my life, and two of them."

"A rubber, sir!" and she cut me to the quick. "And do you apply that noble term to the ignoble pastime that I see" (and she pulled up her spectacles) "proceeding, yes, actually proceeding, in the adjoining room? Do you suppose that I—Sarah Battle—will stand by and see a word filched from its uses to grace the tables of profligacy and chance? Have you forgot your mother-tongue, sir, or shall I send you a copy of Mr. Johnson's dictionary? Do you call a shire-horse a hunter, or take a footman's livery for a gentleman's court suit?"

"Come, come, Mrs. Battle," I said, "I will make so bold as to return you some of your own coin. Have you ever sat down to a game of bridge?"

"No," she said, "not stood up to cut, nor sat down to play, and proud to say so."

"Then, madam," said I, "craving your indulgence for saying it, you are a very rash warrior, for you are conducting a campaign in a country which you have never surveyed."

"Sir," she replied, "you have worsted me. I acknowledge myself beaten, and will immediately walk captive in your triumphal progress to the card-table."

When I had made it known who it was that hung upon my arm, opponents sprang from all quarters, armed *cap-à-pie*, like Minerva emerging from the head of Jove. None so old but that he coveted to break a lance with Mrs. Battle ; none so young but that he must needs think himself entitled to sit at table with her. I took my time and picked my foes, for as to partnership I had given it out that that honour had been already appropriated by myself. The best that offered were a fine woman who earned her clothes by her play and, for all I know, her bread too, and so was in the best of practice, and an elderly beau, whose solicitations were conveyed in a tempest of words that blew away the rest of his opponents.

I asked Mrs. Battle what the stakes should be and was proposing penny points, which tariff, as I said, was reputed, although erroneously, to have the sanction of a bishop, when she broke in upon me with an assurance that of points and tariffs she knew nothing ; that she played for spite and not for money ; and that wild bishops should not drag another farthing from her. So we made no bones about accepting her terms, and I sketched the game for her, and we set to work. She drew the deal and turned up

the card at the end in true whist fashion, and said it was trumps, and would hear nothing to the contrary. But when I laid down my cards, she protested loudly, and said that it was putting too much power into one hand; that she had always been of the mind of the Spartans and Romans, who understood human nature so well that they had two Kings or two Consuls; and that the temptation to abuse her opportunities would infallibly be the ruin of us both. I made light of this at the time, but the shrewd old lady had got the better of the situation; for if she won there was nothing but praise for her, and if she lost she threw the responsibility on the constitution of the game.

She made very merry over *chicane*. It was, she said, the greatest nonsense that ever she heard of. The old beau, indeed, who had claimed it, argued very gallantly that it was a kind of compensation or alms that a powerful adversary could well afford to concede; but Mrs. Battle made short work of him, and said she thought nothing of a general that paid for the damages inflicted by his soldiery, and as for alms, that it was not proper to bestow them except upon beggars.

When no trumps were declared she

changed her figure, and compared us to a ship that had lost its rudder or thrown its helmsman overboard. She would sooner, she affirmed, 'sail a wintry sea' than risk so rash an adventure as ours.

To the method of scoring she took very decided objection. It was, she said, an unpardonable breach of international etiquette to establish a precedence among nations. Nor could she see any kind of reason why the red kings should take precedence of the black ones.

"But, my dear madam, we live now in the days of the new diplomacy, and call a spade a spade. In the comity of sovereigns it is mere blindness not to recognize differences of value, and King Edward must be set as far above the Kaiser as the Kaiser is above the Czar. Again, in the comity of peoples we have great Powers whom we obey and small Powers whom we coerce. As for the order in which the nations are placed, a member of the fair sex is surely the last that ought to argue against it. Do you not estimate your heart, dear madam, at a higher value than even the diamond which is set in your locket? And have not both these articles an incomparable advantage over the club which the lamented Mr. Battle would

carry in his hand when he escorted you along the highway, or the spade with which you would set him to plant your rose-trees? Bridge, madam, I will even venture to maintain, has restored among these pretty puppets of our leisure the natural distinctions and inequalities that obtain in the affairs of monarchs and nations."

Sarah Battle said no more, but already I had seen enough of her to know that her silence was an admission of defeat, a passing under the yoke of her opponent, a mental walking of the plank in respect of the argument. But it was in vain that I asked her to vouchsafe a few opinions for the edification of the public. An article from her hand would, as I assured her, secure an unexampled circulation among card-lovers, and be worth to her I was afraid to say what fabulous sum of red gold. She retained, even in her despondency, an attitude of defiance, and would say no more than that she had not yet forgiven that little Mr. Lamb for his impertinence in publishing her casual observations on whist. Yet I learnt from a friend, who had some very particular business there the other day, that there has lately been a social revolution in Limbo, and that a new game has been intro-

duced by a band of social reformers, with Mrs. Battle at the head of them, which has proved so attractive that even Homer will sometimes make up a four ; though no one, not Mrs. Battle herself, can prevent him from nodding now and again. The configuration of the country and the disposition of the inhabitants are, I am informed, most favourable to the pastime. A volcanic soil provides abundant fuel : meadows of green enamel form natural card-tables : and the natives have unbounded time at their disposal. So that Mrs. Battle is still able to secure "a clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game."

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD SOCIETY HACK

THERE are no books which I am so greedy to browse among as those which discover to me the constitution of my fellow-creatures. I am no literary cannibal; I mean by their constitution neither their anatomy nor the particular peculiarities of their digestive organs. Descriptions of their dietaries, animal, vegetable, and mineral, leave me as cold as the Medical Journal itself. I am so old-fashioned that I shrink from reading the precise records of their ailments and diseases which people set out in the newspapers. But while all accounts of the human body are distasteful to me, I confess that I devour with avidity every fresh revelation of the human mind. When other people are describing their business, I can never mind my own. I am possessed by an insatiable curiosity to know what they suppose themselves to be about, what has impelled them along their present courses, and what precise value they set upon their activities. I long

to get them into my collection, to classify them among my books, and to become intimate with them without the pains and penalties of an introduction.

It is, I suppose, from a conscious incapacity to discharge their functions that I feel a particular craving to inspect the diaries of popular agitators and of that style of persons whom I make so bold as to denominate society hacks. It is, I am convinced, a very false opinion which would divide these representative men from one another. If Mr. Keir Hardie will but publish his memoirs I shall beg for an advance copy and set it beside those of Mr. Creevey. To have a capital in words, invested so successfully as to provide the fortunate possessor with his daily bread, seems to me to offer a basis of comparison undermining all more obvious differences. What concern is it of mine whether the talent be exercised at a dinner-table in Mayfair or on a platform in Merthyr Tydvil; whether Society be defamed by a reckless promulgation of its vanities or a thoughtless condemnation of its trappings? I am equally incapable of both performances, and shall never be able to make a living out of either.

But I must confess that if I had two such

honest gossips together on my bookshelf I should fall a readier prey to the seductions of the older gentleman. I am in these matters a Child of Nature, and love a gay butterfly—if it be no offence to say so—better than his sombre brother; he is more versatile and less destructive. I suspect, indeed, that the world might have done well enough without him, but I have a kindly feeling for colour. I will not be tempted into a word in praise of folly, but—for this, after all, is no more than to love the sinner whilst I deprecate the sin—I confess to a liking for an old fool, and Horry Walpole says there were never so many of them as among the Englishmen of his acquaintance.* These silly souls, I have a strong suspicion, had much method in their madness, and were in possession of that *joie de vivre* which our neighbours reckon the choicest gift of the gods. The belief, indeed, is growing upon me that we were a heartier and more original sort of people a hundred years ago. I am haunted by the fear that Oddity is vanishing from my native land. That Prince of Society Hacks whom I have just quoted declares that the English were the maddest folk in Europe, and holds the

* Letter 34.

climate and the government equally responsible for it. "The first," he says, "is changeable and makes us queer; the latter permits our queernesses to operate as they please."* I ask no better proof of the excellence of both; but as my friends constantly assure me that the seasons have changed, and as I am convinced that the government is not what once it was, I see no cure for the decline of originality but an impeachment of the Ministry, to be followed, at an early date, by the execution of the Clerk of the Weather.

The Old Society Hack whom I have in mind is in fact our last link with that better state of the world, when funny fellows were to be met with in every club and tavern; and I can hardly take up a volume of his memories without fancying, so defective have my senses become, that I scent a whiff of snuff, or catch a few bars of Italian opera and the rustling of a crinoline. For I am free to confess that he is a decaying species, an ancient monument which I commend to the Honourable Society for the preservation of all such. It cannot fly too quickly to his succour. He is already driven into his last ditch, and is hardly to be found any longer

* Letter 22.

but at a tea-fight. Competition is proving too much for him. Machinery has got into his business. M.A.P., Belle, and the Ladies' Maids have cut him out. He is, if the truth be told, somewhat early-Victorian, a kind of court-circular set upon legs. He had at one time a complete knowledge of Sir Bernard Burke, and could tell exactly how our ancient families were connected with one another. This was that part of his stock-in-trade of which he was proudest, yet he would give it away for love to an appreciative customer. But he cannot keep abreast of the times. The vast additions to the peerage have outstripped the capacity of his brain. Mr. Asquith has dealt him the *coup de grâce* with his last batch of creations. He is growing too old for his work. He needs an old-age pension.

For the rest he is of an excellent lineage, and has the blood of the Pepys and the Walpoles running in his veins, beside some connection, in which he takes great pride, with the Grevilles. His presence, too, is comely, but whether this be the consequence of good living or good temper I am unable to decide. He has long been in his anecdote, but is none the worse for that, for he holds it a duty to leave all things better

than he finds them, and makes no exception in the case of a story. His philosophy is a philosophy of clothes, and he accounts no one a proper man who has not a respectable coat to his back. But he sometimes does charity by stealth, particularly if he can find a decayed gentleman. I should hope that he has many friends among these poor folk, for of his acquaintance I am afraid there are few that will trouble themselves to visit him upon his death-bed. His demise, indeed, cannot now be long deferred, and I understand that they have half a column of obituary prepared for him at the offices of the *Morning Post*. He was a friendly creature, and, if one was in the mood for it, a delightful companion. If he did little good, he did no great mischief. Some of us fly higher and finish worse.

AN ESSAY IN APOLOGY

My poor, and indeed, if the truth be told, half-demented friend, the late Elia, on some of those rare occasions when he would unburden himself over a dish of tea was fond of descanting at rather inordinate length on the nurture and properties of an essayist, to which subject he appeared to have devoted as much time and reflection as people commonly dedicate to the more momentous matter of earning their daily sustenance. His whimsical remarks, to which at the time I paid no particular attention, found a lodgment all unknown to myself in some remote recess of my brain, and will force themselves with provoking insistence upon my mind at that delectable hour of five o'clock when I step into my club at the conclusion of my work and run my eye over the assortment of light literature provided for my relaxation. The anxiety as to what my old friend would think of me if he were to catch me at my reading will cause me to look over my shoulder with a kind of

tremulous fear to make sure his angel is not at my elbow, and oftentimes drive me on to pay court to some old master into whose soul the dust has entered these many years, and whose dingy garments begin to hang loosely about his shoulders.

Elia, indeed, had an incurable propensity towards everything that had stood the test of time. The mere fact that a thing was old was for him a recommendation and would procure it a favourable hearing with some points to the good already marked up. It was in vain that I bade him have preferences but no exclusions ; he never seemed able to remember more than the first part of the maxim. He would smack his lips over old literature as if it were old wine, and his exhilaration when he came to decant a bygone essay would have suggested to an unkindly observer that his sips had been already prolonged into a potation.

Essay-writing, he used to declare to me, was the most difficult of all the literary arts, because it required the most perfect naturalness. "The true essayist," he would say, "will enter upon his labours with the simplicity of a child. His innocent artifices, though he fancies them secret as the grave, will be transparent to everyone. His eye

will be single, his conscience light, and his joys and griefs unfeigned. He will make himself known to his readers in the spirit of a child making its first confession. He will be filled with surprise and interest by all he sees. He will have a great sense of the wonder and mystery of the world. He will be deeply conscious of the unfathomable depths of his own nature. Montaigne has indeed been commonly reckoned the most perfect of essayists, because he has preserved to a marked degree this naïveté of the child. His curiosity is inexhaustible. His spirit wanders whither it lists. He explores all questions, high and low, with unaffected delight. His conclusions are always tentative, for he is always a learner, and has no ambition to be other."

"But," he would go on, "I confess myself dissatisfied with my essayist, if he be no more than this. Heaven preserve me, indeed, from a man with a message or doctrine of his own construction! Let such an one get out of my sunlight and retire to his tub, there to deliver him of his philosophy with what speed he may. Yet I would have my essayist emerge like Philammon from the Thebaïd, not only all alive with inquisitiveness, but all abashed with modesty and

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